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## ABSTRACT

A study examined the interplay among the initial family context of noncollege-bound youth, their entry into the full-time adult labor force, and formation of their families. The social psychological literature suggested that parents and other family members played an important role in teaching youth about the value of work, provided them with many experiences that prepare them for employment, and helped connect them with job opportunities. Their parents, other family members, and their own children exerted influence on youth employment patterns in a wide variety of ways, influence that both enhanced and impeded employment. Little research was found that investigated the causal relationships among family living arrangements, family responsibilities, and patterns of youth employment. The issues were complicated by the simultaneity of the processes involved, that is, relationships of cause and effect were intertwined. A few job training and employment programs have begun to target young parents, offer employment services to other family members, and encourage parental involvement. It is concluded that public policies aimed at improving the transition of noncollege-bound youth to the adult job market must take into account the likely influence of the family context of youth--both families of origin and the families they create. (Commentaries on this paper by Frank F. Furstenberg and Margaret Simms are attached.) (YLB)

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# Family Influences on Transition to the Adult Job Market

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**Youth and America's Future:**

The William T. Grant Foundation  
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# YOUTH AND AMERICA'S FUTURE:

## THE WILLIAM T. GRANT FOUNDATION COMMISSION ON WORK, FAMILY AND CITIZENSHIP

When William Thomas Grant established the Grant Foundation in 1936, he sought a better understanding of the ways in which individuals adapt to the vicissitudes of life. Touched in his professional life by the importance of caring human relationships, Mr. Grant wished to "help children develop what is in them" so they would better "enjoy all the good things the world has to offer them."

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*"Against a rising chorus of legitimate concern about the many problems facing today's youth, the Foundation has initiated this Commission on Youth and America's Future to speak in a different voice. It will explore the strengths of America's young men and women, their families, and the programs and community institutions that serve them. We adopt this approach not to diminish the importance of the problems that exist, but to learn the lessons of success. The Foundation is confident that this effort to look with renewed respect at youth, where they stride as well as where they stumble, will help forge the links of understanding and mutual responsibility that make our democracy strong."*

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# **FAMILY INFLUENCES ON TRANSITIONS TO THE ADULT JOB MARKET: A FOCUS ON NON-COLLEGE-BOUND YOUTH**

Robert I. Lerman and Theodora Ooms

**Commentaries by**

Frank F. Furstenberg, Jr

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This paper was prepared for the Commission by Professor Robert I. Lerman, Center for Human Resources, Heller Graduate School, Brandeis University, and Theodora Ooms, Director of the Family Impact Seminar, American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy Research and Education Foundation.

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August 1988

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Robert I. Lerman and Theodora Ooms

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# **FAMILY INFLUENCES ON TRANSITIONS TO THE ADULT JOB MARKET: A FOCUS ON NON-COLLEGE-BOUND YOUTH**

## **Executive Summary**

The family context of young adults aged 18-24 has been much neglected by scholars, policymakers, and program administrators. The majority of this age group remain living with their parents or other family members and are wholly or partially dependent upon them for economic support. Large numbers of young adults marry and/or become parents themselves.

This paper explores what is known about family influences on the labor force behavior of non-college-bound youth, with special attention to low income, minority youth whose persistently high levels of unemployment generate so much policy concern.

The major questions considered are:

- o What are the living arrangements of youth 18-24 years old? What are the characteristics of those living with their parents or other relatives? How do these living arrangements affect young people's search for jobs?
- o What influence do parents and other family members have on the success of youth in finding and keeping jobs?
- o How do the family responsibilities of young men and women affect their job status?
- o What are the policy and program implications of taking youth's family context into account?

We approached these questions through a selective review of the social science literature and through presentation of new tabulations of national data on the living arrangements and other characteristics of youth. In addition, we conducted phone interviews with a small number of youth employment program experts to learn about some promising approaches to working with youth's families.

### Key Findings

- o Both historically and currently, the years 18-24 are a period of semi-independence. Until their mid-twenties, most young men and women continue to live in their parental homes or with other relatives. Only about one-quarter of 21-24 year-old men and less than 20 percent of young women are living on their own or with non-relatives only. The post-war trend toward living independently and delaying marriage shifted around 1980 toward youth remaining longer in the parental home.
- o Black and Hispanic youth are more likely than white youth to live with relatives. In 1986, almost three out of every four jobless black and Hispanic young men were in the household of a parent, sibling, or grandparent.
- o Over 92 percent of Hispanic, black, and white young men living with a wife and child were working. Absent fathers were no more likely to work than were childless young men.
- o Motherhood reduces the likelihood of employment among young women. When young mothers, especially white and Hispanic mothers, live with their parents, they are more likely to be employed than if they live independently.
- o Little research investigates the causal relationships among family living arrangements, family responsibilities, and patterns of youth employment. The issues are complicated by the simultaneity of the processes involved: that is, relationships of cause and effect are intertwined. As one example, an inability to obtain a good job may increase dependence on one's parents, but the availability of their financial and in-kind support may, in turn, reduce the urgency of finding a full-time job. Similarly, low earnings may discourage young people from marrying, having children, or supporting children. At the same time, delays in marriage and parenthood

may permit young people to avoid making a serious commitment to the adult job market.

- o When parents and siblings are employed, youth are more likely to be employed. Some research shows a link between the welfare status of parents and the difficulties youth experience in the job market.
- o There has been little research on the broad subject of what parents teach their children about work and how they help them find jobs and succeed in them. Nonetheless, it is clear that many families prepare children and teenagers for work through typical family activities and responsibilities. By assigning jobs around the house and encouraging neighborhood employment, by advising young people, and by their work habits, family members teach children much about how to become and remain employed.
- o When parents and siblings have a wide network of social contacts (through their jobs or through church or club membership) family members assist youth to find jobs.
- o Until recently, job training and employment programs paid little or no attention to living arrangements and family responsibilities of young enrollees. Parents have not actively involved in supporting or reinforcing program efforts.

However, a few programs have begun to target young parents, offer employment services to other family members, and to encourage parent involvement.

#### **Policy and Program Implications**

Public policies aimed at improving the transition of non-college-bound youth to the adult job market should take into account the likely influence of the family context of youth -- both families of origin and the families they create. We point out some complex dilemmas and suggest possible new directions to stimulate discussion, debate, and further research. For example:

- o Since the large majority of unemployed youth are living at home, policies

should focus more on strategies to raise their long-run earning capacity than on providing current jobs.

- o Income support and youth employment programs cannot avoid providing incentives or disincentives for living in the parental home and sharing economic resources with them. The trade-offs are somewhat complicated to sort out. Research and debate are needed to consider in which situations it is desirable to encourage young men and women to become independent from their families and in which to encourage continued dependence.
- o The evidence that most young, absent fathers are living with their parents suggests that stronger child support collection efforts are warranted.
- o Employment and training programs for youth should consider expanding their services to youth's parents, and those designed for young unmarried mothers should include the unmarried fathers as enrollees.
- o Parent involvement appears to be a promising strategy for programs designed to increase youth employability and work participation.

# **FAMILY INFLUENCES ON TRANSITIONS TO THE ADULT JOB MARKET: A FOCUS ON NON-COLLEGE-BOUND YOUTH**

## **Introduction**

When they reach the age of 18, American youth become adults in the eyes of the law. But it is not until they complete school, leave home, and earn their own livings, and later marry and become parents that they become fully functioning adults in the eyes of society. For many youth today, the transition to social adulthood is considerably delayed and often does not follow this orderly sequence.

For most young people, the years 18 to 24 are years of semi-independence. Increasing numbers of young men and women continue to live with, and/or are wholly or partially economically dependent upon, their parents well into their twenties as they attend college, work part-time, or do not work at all. For those continuing their full-time formal education through their early twenties, the slow transition to adulthood represents an investment in raising their lifetime earnings potential and in providing a broad base of general non-vocational knowledge. However, for youth not going on to college, the semi-independence is involuntary, often the result of an inability to find a good, full-time job. Their difficulties in the job market cause some to delay marriage and having children. In a growing number of cases, however, semi-independent young adults become parents even before they can support themselves and their children. Many unmarried young parents become financially dependent on state support.

Until recently, high youth unemployment and unmarried parenting have been viewed as separate problems. The persistence of high youth unemployment, especially among minorities and even during periods of economic recovery, has led to numerous studies of the underlying causes and consequences of these young people's employment difficulties. These studies have usually focussed on identifying those characteristics of youth that impede their success in the job market, such as low literacy, inadequate job skills, etc. Since the early 1960s, a range of federal

government programs has provided training and work experience in order to improve the chances that low income youth will obtain permanent jobs and become economically self-sufficient. A largely distinct set of studies and programs have concentrated on the problems of teenage pregnancy, illegitimacy, and the economic hardships of young, unmarried mothers.

Within the last few years, researchers and policy advocates have begun to link the employment difficulties of some young men with their delaying marriage and with the increasing rates of out of wedlock births. Yet, only a few studies have carefully examined these connections. (Wilson and Neckerman, 1985.) Even less analysis has been devoted to examining the relationship among the patterns of youth employment and unemployment and their social contexts -- their families, neighborhoods, and communities (Anderson, 1985).

Research, policies, and programs that ignore the family context of youth are myopic. For all their developing independence, young people usually retain strong economic and psychological ties to their parents. The period from ages 18 to 24 is a critical stage in the family life cycle. Over this period, some will make a smooth transition from being dependent upon parents to assuming responsibility for self, spouse, and frequently child. Some will delay forming families and even leaving their parents because they cannot earn enough to do so. Others will have children before they are able to support themselves. It seems reasonable to suppose that their family circumstances and responsibilities will have some influence on youth's labor market behavior.

This paper examines the interplay among the initial family context of non-college-bound youth, their entry into the full-time adult labor force, and formation of their families. We are primarily interested in the following questions:

- o What are the living arrangements of youth 18-24 years old? What proportion are living with their parents or other relatives?
- o What are the linkages between youth's transition to independent living and the transition to the adult job market?

- o How do living arrangements of young people affect their search for jobs?
- o What influence do parents and other family members have on patterns of youth employment?
- o How do family responsibilities of young men and women affect their job status?

This paper can take only a modest first step toward answering these and other related questions. The issues are complicated because the processes are simultaneous, and the relationships of cause and effect are intertwined. For example, an inability to obtain a good job may increase dependency on one's parents, but the availability of parental financial and in-kind support may, in turn, reduce the urgency of finding a full-time job. Similarly, low earnings may discourage young people from marrying, having children, or supporting children; at the same time, delays in marriage and parenthood may permit young people to avoid making a serious commitment to the adult job market. Adding further to the complexity of these family-work interactions are choices of post-secondary schooling versus full-time work. In general, we expect that the lack of jobs encourages young people to extend their schooling, but periods of high unemployment may weaken the ability of their parents to provide financial help while they stay in school.

Despite these and other complications, we explore what is known about family influences on work patterns of non-college-bound youth. Our purpose is to outline the range of family issues that need to be considered, suggest some of the complexities and salience for the population of most policy concern -- low income, minority, unemployed youth -- and discuss some possible implications of this family perspective for youth employment programs, welfare, and child support policy. We approach these tasks through a selective review of the research literature and presentation of new tabulations of national data. In addition, we draw on discussions with several program experts. Since the family focus is relatively unexamined to date, our exploration highlights several questions that merit extensive

additional research.

## **Family Roles in Youth's Transitions to the Adult Labor Force**

### **An Historical Overview**

One of the most powerful images of American life is the young man who leaves home in his early teens to seek fame and fortune far away and seldom returns home. In their classic social history of American youth, Oscar and Mary Handlin (1971) develop this image and suggest that the unstable and expanding nature of American society meant that, much more so than in Europe, American parents reared their sons so that they would wish to leave their homes to seek their livelihood. "Living with the certainty of separation... a boy learned to act independently and to get along on his own resources. Self-sufficiency was the immediate goal and the sooner achieved the better... learning that all ties were transient American boys of the eighteenth century learned that home was not a place at which to remain but a point from which to depart." (Handlin and Handlin, 1971: 19-20). Certainly the annals of American history and literature are replete with life stories, including those of the immigrants themselves, that illustrate the abrupt and complete breaking away from familial and social ties at an early age. This image of autonomous, adventurous, unattached youth has deep roots in American culture and, somewhat curiously, resurfaced in the sixties and early seventies in the celebration of student protests, hippies, and flower children.

However, this belief in the independence of youth is both an historical and contemporary myth. Family historian Joseph Kett's thorough and careful study of American adolescence from 1790 to the present (1977) suggests that the achievement of early, sudden, and complete independence was more the exception than the rule. Kett finds that, "the act of leaving home as a single and irrevocable event is exaggerated...sporadic home leaving, patterns of departures for brief periods followed by returns home antedated the final departures by several years" (Kett, 1977:17).

It is often noted that, in contrast to parents today, parents in previous

centuries taught their children essential work skills through having their children work alongside them on the farm, in the shop, or even in the factory. Yet, the striking fact is that since early colonial times, parents frequently placed their young children, from age 10 upwards, in the homes of relatives, neighbors, or even strangers. Indeed, until the early nineteenth century, children were placed out as quasi-servants or as contracted apprentices, either to relieve the cost of their support at home, learn employment skills, or gain experience in aspects of their parents' trade before returning home to resume work in that trade. Often, youth were expected to contribute their meager earnings to support their parents.

Kett thus describes the ages 10-21 as a period of semi-dependence through the early 19th century. During these centuries, he writes, dependency and residency were not interchangeable concepts. Children from landowning families, who expected an inheritance or who were needed to work the parental farm in the summer time, remained quite firmly under parental control even when they often did not live at home. Poorer children had more de facto freedom but could do little with their freedom.

In the nineteenth century, parents increasingly sent their children to schools and boarding academies in the hope that this would help them attain higher status or advance their careers. Extended schooling became an alternative route to leaving home. Yet, even this break from home was incomplete since young people attended the boarding schools only during the winter months and often returned home to work on the farm during the summer.

From the late nineteenth century onward, professional educators and psychologists, youth workers, and educational and recreational institutions assumed a major role in helping older adolescents make the transition to adulthood. Some of the earliest job training programs were developed in schools, YMCA's, and high schools serving working-class youth. But the most common route to finding a job was still through one's family or friends. (Hareven and Langebach, 1978). For those

who went on to college and university, this transition became more protracted (Kett, 1977). By the late nineteenth century, the family's role in helping their children enter the work force had both diminished in importance and changed in nature. But young people, for the most part, continued to live at home until they got married. Unlike today's youth, they were more likely to help support, than be supported by, their families. In 1880 in Philadelphia, for example, working young men and women would typically contribute their earnings to the parental household for a period of 7 years before establishing their own families (Modell, Furstenberg, & Hershberg, 1981).

Until recent decades, the adult responsibilities of marriage and parenthood were much less likely to be assumed independently of one another. The extent of premarital sexual activity has varied considerably throughout the ages and at times, such as the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, was quite widespread (Shorter, 1975, Stone, 1979). In such periods, not surprisingly, pre-marital conceptions were common but were expected to be followed by marriage rather than by an illegitimate birth.

In summary, in previous centuries, young people generally remained under the control of the parents until they had adult jobs and married. The family's role in the transition to adult employment took place through direct training and temporary placement in another home and work place. With industrial development, the growth of unions, child labor laws, and the shift from rural farm to urban settings, a substantial decline in child and youth employment took place through the first half of the 20th century. Along with this decline came an increasingly formal, institutionalized, and protracted process for preparing and placing young people in full-time jobs.

#### Contemporary Patterns of Family Influence on Youth Employment

While the family's influence undoubtedly has diminished, it remains important. In the current period, sociologists have demonstrated that family income, education,

and occupational status directly and indirectly influence children and youth's school achievement, college attendance, choice of college and college achievement, and occupational and career choice.<sup>1</sup> This well known research concentrates on the long-term employment and career consequences of family background. It does not explore the direct linkages between family circumstances and the residential and employment patterns of youth.

In our focus on the transition of youth to full-time jobs, we begin with the general question: What are some of the processes through which parents and other family members influence the employment of young people? Since the literature on this question is sparse, we turn to some related research on parent/adolescent relationships in general and family influence on education in particular for some clues.

An emerging body of psychological literature (reviewed by Youniss, 1988, in a paper in this series) examines the relations between parents and adolescents in terms of attitudes, values, and communication patterns. The findings of these surveys of parents and youth counter the general view that adolescents' growing autonomy implies a necessary alienation and distancing from parental influence. In general, young people get along well with parents, share many of their basic values, communicate with them on a wide range of matters, and seek their advice especially regarding choice of work, career, further education, and financial matters. Certainly, parents and teens typically avoid some sensitive aspects of social behavior, such as sexual behavior, drinking, and smoking; on these topics, young people often turn to their peers for counsel and norms. Moreover, the process of renegotiating the relationship to permit adolescents a greater degree of freedom and control often causes tense and difficult moments.

Nevertheless, this research strongly suggests that in the areas of their relationship that most directly concern education, work, and careers, parents of young people continue to play important, constructive, and influential roles.

Parents, Youniss writes, provide young people with many elements of social capital -- the norms, ideas, and expectations that will enable them to make the transition to adulthood.

Most of this psychological research was conducted on well functioning, middle income, white families or on young people attending college. We do not know whether similar research conducted on families representing more diverse racial, ethnic, and income groups would reveal similar or different patterns of parent/youth relationships and parental influence. However, there seems no reason to assume that their influence would be any less important.<sup>2</sup>

How do parents motivate their children to seek work? What do parents actually teach their children about work? What do they do to help them find jobs? How do they help -- or fail to help -- them succeed in their jobs? Although a rich research literature documents how families help their young children succeed in school and in their social world,<sup>3</sup> there is little research on whether and how families help their adolescent children obtain jobs and succeed in them.

This gap in research is echoed by an absence of any focus on the parental context in most youth and employment programs. It is as if once a young person reaches age 16-18 years, families no longer count -- they are considered either irrelevant to the issue of youth employment or believed to have a negative influence. Neither high school educators nor vocational or employment counselors acknowledge the potential for parents to contribute to their children's employability. One argument is that rapid changes in the job market have left most parents out of touch with the types of jobs available and with the skills their young son or daughter need to qualify for them. But, in fact, it is not clear that parents are less informed now than they were a half century ago when they played a major role in developing the work skills of their children.

Drawing on the insights of research about families as educators (Leichter, 1974, Clark, 1983), we can assume that children first learn about the values and

responsibilities involved in work through jobs their parents give them around the house. From these experiences, they learn the routines and habits necessary to complete a job well to the satisfaction of the parent. Also, they learn as young teenagers about paid work through jobs provided by neighbors or others in the community, such as home chores, babysitting, running errands, news paper routes, garden jobs, or stocking shelves in grocery stores. Through these experiences, they also learn directly about forming good work habits, being responsible, handling money, and so forth. Some families presumably encourage and urge their children to get these experiences while others may not.

In addition to teaching their children about what is involved in work, families appear to play an important role in increasing the likelihood that young people will obtain employment. Studies have found that when parents, and especially siblings, are themselves employed, youth are more likely to be employed. (Rees and Gray, 1982; and Robert Lerman, 1986). Existing empirical studies do not reveal how parental employment affects a child's employment. A "modeling" effect may take place in which the influence of parent or sibling employment is to give young people an understanding of, and familiarity with, the expectations, constraints, benefits, and disadvantages of holding a job. The youngster will learn from them either by instruction or by example about how to apply for a job, dress for work, the importance of punctuality and regular attendance, and how to handle difficulties in the workplace. Teenagers whose parents have not worked in a long time -- such as long-term welfare recipients -- may miss learning about these vital aspects of work experience.<sup>4</sup>

Employed parents also may do more to connect their children with job opportunities than parents who are unemployed. BLS and CPS studies confirm that the most common way people find jobs is through the informal network of relatives and friends. Granovetter (1973) elaborates on this general finding in an article on "the strength of weak ties" which suggests that the parent's role in job seeking and

finding is indirect. Granovetter found that job seekers rely much more on "weak ties" (persons whom they knew only slightly) than strong intimate ties since it is these weak ties that allow a person to reach beyond his or her small, well-defined social circle in order to make connections with possible employers. For young people, their "weak ties" would often be found through parents' friends or parents' colleagues at work, church acquaintances, or through their friends' parents. Presumably, the wider the social network of their parents, friends, siblings, and other relatives, the greater their chances of finding a job. Those parents and siblings who are employed and those who go to church are more likely to have a wider social network to draw upon (Freeman, 1986).

In recent years, a new phenomenon has modified the route by which young people learn about work and may have served to diminish family influence somewhat. A rising proportion of high school students -- especially middle income, suburban white students -- are working at part-time jobs, particularly in the fast food industry. About 70 percent of high school students between 16-18 are currently in the labor force (Greenberger and Steinberg, 1986; Charner and Fraser, 1987). The types of jobs they hold are often found by word of mouth through peers independent of parental ties. According to one study of this contemporary work, parents generally approve of youth working, but it may have the effect of loosening parental control since parents apparently believe they have no claim on their adolescents' earnings. Youth are free to spend their earnings as they wish, and indeed research suggests that, in contrast to previous times, the majority of employed teenagers make no contribution at all to the basic expenditures of their parents' households (Greenberger and Steinberg, 1986, Johnston, Bachman and O'Malley, 1982).

In summary, the social psychological literature suggests that parents and other family members play an important role in teaching youth about the value of work, provide them with many of the experiences that prepare them for employment, and

help connect them with job opportunities. This influence may be strongest if the young adults remain living with their parents, but as long as they remain in close touch with their parents, (which most are) their influence will be felt. Just as research has shown that some families are more successful than others in helping their children succeed in school, even controlling for income and race, we find that some families do a better job than others in helping their adult children enter and do well in the world of work. We now turn to discuss another important dimension of the family context of youth employment, namely, the economic motivations and constraints that come into play as a result of youth's living arrangements and family responsibilities.

#### **The Interplay Between Living Arrangements, Family Responsibilities, and Youth Employment**

Economists generally emphasize the characteristics of workers and employers in analyzing employment patterns of young workers. A family perspective raises new questions about how family living arrangements and family responsibilities affect the labor supply decisions of young adults. Does living in the parental household enhance or diminish the likelihood that young people will be employed? Does having a child make it more or less likely that young parents will work? We provide some descriptive answers to these questions in the next section in which we develop a profile of the living arrangements of young people. Our tabulations, however, do not shed much light on the causal relationships these questions imply.

Again the interactions between the various factors are highly complex and, moreover, we know little about the patterns of economic dependency between parents and young adults. When youth live with parents, any income they earn is presumed to be pooled with the income of other family members and included in government surveys as "family income." We do not know, however, whether youth who earn some income contribute to the household's expenses such as rent, food, etc. or how much they contribute. Those living at home who do not earn clearly receive from their parent(s) considerable financial support in kind.

If the family is willing to provide shelter and food without expecting any money contribution from a 20 year-old, the young man or woman who lives at home may be free to work or not as they please and need only work for personal consumption such as clothes, entertainment, or luxuries. However, in those families that cannot afford to support another member or, for other reasons, choose to insist that young adults share expenses, there may be a good deal more family encouragement and reinforcement to find employment. When the family insists that the young adult leave home and live independently, the need to search for a source of income becomes urgent.

A young person's own family responsibilities can both enhance and impede employment. Since World War II, two demographic trends that accompany the assumption of adult responsibilities are linked with youth's entry into the workforce: delay in the age of marriage and the steep rise in unmarried parenthood. A premarital pregnancy is less likely to lead to marriage. If a young woman becomes a mother out of wedlock, her premature parenthood seriously handicaps her ability to work, but may also provide the motivation for her to do so. Also, while becoming a mother thrusts upon her new adult responsibilities and status, it almost inevitably locks her into renewed dependence on her parents or the state for economic support for herself and her child. In the short run, early childbearing is associated with serious difficulties in the labor market, although in the long run a recent study shows that many unmarried teenage mothers overcome these difficulties (Furstenberg et al., 1987). Early pregnancy is often preceded or followed by dropping out of school. Although motherhood can create a strong incentive to work in order to support her child, efforts to complete her education, enter job training, and get a job are seriously constrained by the practical difficulties of locating affordable child care. The wages she may be able to earn are rarely sufficient to support herself and a child.

The interaction between early fatherhood and work is also complex. When a

young man has good employment potential, this may encourage marriage and fatherhood. These family responsibilities will increase his work effort. For unmarried or absent parents, the desire to pay child support might be expected to stimulate labor force activity. However, legal obligations alone may provide a disincentive since child support obligations may act as a tax on earnings.<sup>5</sup>

The impact of young parenthood on work will depend partly on the parent's access to child care from the mother's (and sometimes the father's) parents. Such child care is more likely if the young parent is living in the parental home, but may also occur if they live independently but nearby. Whether child care is provided by grandparents will, of course, depend on their own employment status.

In summary, their parents, other family members, and their own children exert influence on youth employment patterns in a wide variety of ways. Researchers have only begun to investigate and disentangle these relationships. In the discussion below, we focus on employment and family patterns of out-of-school youth in the late teens and early twenties. Having completed their education, these non-college youth are starting their transitions to adult employment and independent household living patterns.

What living arrangements do we observe for these youth in the mid-1980s? Which types of youth are more likely to live in the parental home? What do these patterns suggest about the questions that need to be investigated about relationships between economic dependence, family living arrangements, and youth employment? The next section provides descriptive data on these patterns while section four discusses some of the analytical questions.

#### **Profile of Youth in the Family Context**

Most young men and women live in their parental homes until their early twenties. In 1985, CPS data revealed that about 60 percent of men and 48 percent of women, ages 18-24, lived with one or both parents; this included unmarried college students living in dormitories. Only one of six men and one of three women

lived with a spouse. Most of the remaining young people lived independently in non-family households (Bianchi, 1987). Blacks, Hispanics, and young people of Asian origin are more likely to continue to live at home, even controlling for income. Adult children are more likely to remain in parental homes if the parents marriage is intact than if parents are divorced or remarried. Children born later and those from smaller homes are more likely to remain at home (Bianchi, 1987).

The increasing trend to postpone the age of marriage accounts for these changing patterns in youth's living arrangements since World War II: 1) From the 1960s to 1980, there was a constant trend in which a rising proportion of youth left home early and lived independently -- alone, with friends, or with a partner of the opposite sex before getting married (Goldscheider and Le Bourdais, 1986). 2) After 1980, the proportion of young adults, age 18-29, living with their parents, which had been fairly constant, rose dramatically over the next five years and has continued to rise, at least for males. (Glick and Sung Lin, 1986; Bianchi, 1987; Goldscheider and de Vanzo, 1987).

The recent shift toward a delay in nest-leaving has been explained by a host of factors affecting youth's economic situation ranging from the high cost of housing, lower real earnings rates, and increased rates of divorce and unmarried parenthood. Bianchi (1987), however, suggests that the decision to remain or return home is a product of negotiation between the young adult and parents. Economic factors and other circumstances within the parents own household often influence how the negotiation is resolved. These factors may include the parents financial ability to support other members, the crowdedness of the household, and cultural factors. The recent decrease in family size gives parents more room to accommodate young adults and appears to account for some of delayed nest-leaving. Bianchi found that children born later and those from smaller families were more likely to remain in the home after the age of 18. Bianchi and Goldschieder and Da Vanzo found that black and Hispanic young adults are more likely to be living in the

parental home, controlling for family socioeconomic status and size.

Living and family arrangements vary widely by age, race, sex, and school enrollment status. Household patterns of young people are far more diverse than simply living alone, living with parents, and forming one's own family. To obtain details on the living arrangements of young people, we developed new tabulations from the National Longitudinal Survey of Labor Force Behavior (NLS), a data set that has followed a national sample of nearly 13,000 young people (14-21 year-olds in 1979) every year since 1979. By 1986, the sample was representative of the nation's 21-28 year-olds.<sup>6</sup> We tabulate living arrangements using a hierarchical method classifying each youth by the first grouping to which they belong. For example, in Table 1, a person classified as living with a spouse and no child might also be living with a parent or sibling.

The transition to independent status can mean a variety of living arrangements, ranging from living alone to living with a spouse and child. In Table I the data shows that as of 1986, almost half of 21-24 year-old women and about one-quarter of the men had formed families (married and/or had children) and lived with a spouse and/or children. A surprisingly small proportion of young men and women lived alone, with a partner of the opposite sex, or with other unrelated roommates. Virtually all the remaining young people lived with their parents and had not yet become parents.

Racial differences emerge in several ways (See Table 2). Blacks with no spouses are more likely than other groups to live with their own children in households. About one of every six black 21-24 year-old women with children lived with their parents; another 20 percent of young black women had become parents but lived in households independently of parents or a spouse. Even among men, the differential is striking: five percent of black men and less than 1 percent of white men lived with their own children but no spouse.

The tendency to form a household separate from parents, spouses, children, or

other relatives varied by sex and race. Young white men were most likely to choose this arrangement. Women were less likely to do so, although over one in five white women lived this way. What accounts for most of the differential is that whites were more likely to cohabit with a partner or to live with unrelated roommates. Black and Hispanic young people were more likely to live with relatives, even if a parent was not in the household.

Those still in college were more likely to remain living with parents than out-of-school youth. In part, this is because of the convention that classifies students living in dormitories, fraternities, or sororities as part of their parents' households. In Table 2, note that the differences are much larger among young women than among men.

Educational status was associated with different patterns of household independence. High school dropouts were less likely to form households that were independent of relatives than out-of-school graduates. However, white male dropouts were more likely to be married and supporting children than were white male graduates (26 percent versus 14 percent).

Young men often found themselves in households likely to require their economic support. Of high school graduates not in school, about 60 percent of whites but only 40 percent of blacks and 45 percent of Hispanics had responsibility for their own households (a place separate from their parents or relatives other than their spouse). On the other hand, more black and Hispanic young men had responsibility for children outside their households. In addition, living with a parent was less likely to relieve black and Hispanic men from the need to contribute to the household's support because they were much more likely to live with only one parent and/or with parents who had low earnings.

Expected employment responses to living arrangements are less clear in the case of women. One would expect that the young women most likely to work are those with obligations to support a household and who do not have to care for a

young child. This group includes those who live alone, live with spouses but no children, live with partners of the opposite sex, or live with nonrelatives or other relatives. Of women graduates not in school, 42 percent of white women but only 18 percent of black women and 31 percent of Hispanic women fit into these expected-to-work categories.

Thus, on the basis of living arrangements and family responsibilities, it is plausible that the economic urgency to work is similar among men, but white women are more likely to work than black or Hispanic young women.

A good indication of how the variety of living arrangements carries differences in the urgency of employment is the income status of various household units. Tables 3 and 4 show the wide range of poverty levels and family incomes of young high school graduates not enrolled in school. It is striking that the young people who do marry and have children are rarely poor. Less than 5 percent of black and white two-parent units were poor in 1985. On the other hand, over 70 percent of black mothers living away from parents were poor and averaged incomes of only about \$8,000.

The patterns in Table 5 are broadly consistent with the notion that employment is higher among youth who have and can fulfill an important provider role. For example, while 96 percent of black married fathers and 92 percent of black husbands without children had jobs in May 1986, only 69 percent of black young men living with a parent or other relative were employed. The patterns were similar for white and Hispanic men.

Another way of looking at job-family connections is to examine the distribution of the not employed and employed youth. Table 6 reveals that the vast majority of young, not employed high school graduates lived with their parents or other close relatives. Indeed, perhaps the most striking and significant finding from these tables is that almost three of every four jobless black and Hispanic young men were in the household of a parent, sibling, or grandparent.

### Family Economic Factors and the Transition to Full-time Employment

These tabulations show that few young people live by themselves or with unrelated roommates. The majority live with parents or other close relatives and as adults are responsible for others. Although the tables provide more detail than previously available about the variety of living arrangements and their interrelationship to family status, income, and employment of youth, they do not answer questions about causation, such as: How do differences in family living arrangements influence youth employment patterns? Conversely, does holding a job or having high earnings affect living arrangements? How do families inhibit or encourage employment of young people? The literature is not well-developed on these topics, but there are several interesting findings about the family-employment relationship.

In a 1985 paper, Marjorie McElroy analyzed the relationship between the employment of 19-24 year-old white men and whether they lived with their parents. Using NLS data, she found that the higher the incomes of parents, the less likely young men were to take low wage jobs. They were less likely to work, but were more likely to live with their parents. According to McElroy, the ability to live with parents provides a kind of insurance against joblessness and permits young unmarried men to stay off the job if wages are too low. As wage opportunities rise, young men enter the labor force. Wage levels beyond a certain point will cause young men to leave their parents' households.

McElroy finds that two offsetting factors influence the household patterns of low income youth. The fact that their parents have low income should discourage them from living at home since there is little to share among household members. On the other hand, youth from low income families often can earn only low wages, thus limiting their ability to form their own family and inducing them to stay with a parent. If they do stay at home, they are less likely to work. But, it takes only a moderate wage to draw them into jobs and cause them to leave home.

The McElroy results are consistent with observed racial differences in wages and family patterns. While black young men earn much less than whites, they are only somewhat more likely to live with a parent, probably because of the lower income of their parents.

Marriage and earnings patterns are also interdependent. In a sample of 576 employed, 18-24 year-old men, Robert Nakosteen and Michael Zimmer (1987) looked at whether marriage exerted a positive influence on earnings or whether the connection resulted from the greater tendency to marry among those with high earnings potential. Their findings cast doubt on the notion that marrying causes young men to raise their earnings. Once they took account of factors predicting marriage, the relationship between marriage and earnings was no longer statistically significant. Although the Nakosteen-Zimmer conclusions are subject to a number of caveats, they cast doubt on the notion that marriage per se causes young men to become employed.

An alternative hypothesis is that causation runs in the other direction, that employment opportunities of young men influence not only their marriage rates but also their early fatherhood patterns. William Julius Wilson has argued this position forcefully. In a 1986 article, he and Kathryn Neckerman stated: "...available evidence supports the argument that among blacks increasing joblessness is related to the rising proportions of families headed by women." (p. 256).<sup>7</sup> Gordon Berlin and Andrew Sum (1988) make a similar argument, claiming that declines in earnings accounted for about one-half of the 1964-84 decline in marriage rates among 20-24 year-old high school dropouts and nearly 30 percent of the decline among high school graduates.

Not all the evidence supports the link between unemployment and low marriage rates. First, the trend toward delayed marriage and female headship began during the 1960s when economic growth was extremely rapid. Second, since the marriage rate among 20-24 year-olds in the early 1960s was unusually high by historical

standards, noneconomic factors might explain part of the trend toward delayed marriage. Delays in marriage over this period have become a trend throughout Western industrialized countries, even those with rising real wages.

Finally, an analysis by Lerman (1987) showed that joblessness had no impact on the chances that young men become unmarried fathers. One test of the relationship looked at how the schooling, work, and earnings patterns of 14-18 year-olds was related to their fatherhood status by ages 19-23. Young men who were neither in school nor working were no more likely to become unmarried fathers than other young men. Evidence on the impact of area employment conditions is even more persuasive. According to Lerman's results, young men living in counties with high unemployment rates showed no higher tendency to become unmarried fathers than did young men living in counties with good job opportunities. No significant effects emerged either among white or black young men.

Several studies show that the characteristics of parents and other family members influence job patterns of low income young people. Lerman (1986) found that, even in ghetto areas, the presence of employed adults raises the likelihood of work by young black men. Perhaps, parents serve as role models or help their children find jobs; another possibility is that parents and children have similar characteristics.

In a 1986 study, Lerman found that youth in families receiving welfare payments were significantly less likely to work than other, similarly poor youth. Among black 19-24 year-old men, living in a welfare family increased the time spent neither working nor in school by over two months. A common explanation for this result is that welfare benefits discourage youth from working because earnings lower the family's benefits. But, Lerman pointed out that welfare rules generally do not penalize the earnings of young workers; young people most likely to work (nonstudents, ages 18-24) would usually be excluded from the welfare unit in any

event. He suggests that the link between welfare and not working might have to do with the family's experience on welfare or the lack of connections to jobs that come about when parents are either not present or not working.

More detailed connections between family relationships and youth employment showed up in research by Rees and Gray (1982). Their analysis of NLS data revealed that sibling employment as well as parental employment influenced the 1976 employment rates of 17-20 year-old males and females. Among out-of-school young men, fathers who were self-employed raised the jobholding among young men and women by 16 to 25 percent. Siblings' employment also exerted positive impacts on employment. Young men were more influenced by their brothers' employment and young women by their sisters' employment. Rees and Gray interpret this result as indicating the importance of information networks since many occupations employ a large proportion of workers of the same sex.

A willingness to accept family responsibilities almost certainly raises the earnings of young men. As Table 5 shows, over 92 percent of Hispanic, black, and white young men living with a wife and child were working. But, what about young fathers who lived away from their children? Despite the greater financial responsibilities of absent fathers than of young men who had never fathered a child, the two groups worked about the same percentage of the year. In 1985, absent black fathers, ages 21-24, and high school graduates worked nearly three-fourths of the year, about the same as did comparable non-fathers. Employment rates were higher for white men (about .86), but absent fathers were no more likely to work than were childless young men. Those absent fathers who paid child support and those who lived away from their parents were most likely to have high earnings. For example, absent black fathers living away from parents and paying child support averaged nearly \$13,000 in earnings in 1985; those living at home paying no child support earned less than \$7,000 per year. Of course, it is likely that making support payments and living away from parents were more the result

than the cause of high earnings.

As expected, motherhood reduces the likelihood of employment among young women. Yet, a majority of married mothers had jobs in 1986 (see Table 5); the proportion working ranged from 53 percent of Hispanic to 65 percent of black married mothers. The family impacts on unmarried mothers are interesting since they theoretically could go in either direction. Living with a parent tends to reduce the urgency of taking a job, but tends to increase the mother's ability to obtain child care and other supports. The 1986 figures in Table 5 indicate that the assistance provided by living with a parent has the larger effect for young Hispanic and white mothers. Among white unmarried mothers, living with a parent was associated with a rise in the proportion employed from 68 to 84 percent. This differential may understate the impact of living with a parent since increased earnings would normally encourage young mothers to set up their own households.

Welfare benefits may explain part of the higher employment of young mothers who live with a parent. The size and the structure of state welfare benefits influence the decision of young mothers to form their own households or share households (David Ellwood and Mary Jo Bane, 1983; and Robert Hutchens, George Jakubson, and Saul Schwartz, 1986).<sup>8</sup> In general, the more generous the benefits to those who form separate households, the more likely young mothers are to live away from home. Thus, young mothers may be choosing between living at home and working or living away from home and going on welfare.

To summarize, the interactions among employment, marriage, family formation, and subsequent employment are complex. So far, no studies have traced the full process nor isolated the independent impact of family status on early labor market outcomes. Still, we have learned about some linkages between family and work.

Whatever determines a young person's living arrangements, most find themselves in a family context of one sort or another. Only about one-quarter of 21-24 year-old men and less than 20 percent of young women are living on their

own or with only nonrelatives.

Family responsibilities and living arrangements both influence and are influenced by a young person's employment and earnings. Living at home helps young people find jobs, but permits them to avoid taking low wage work. By itself, a job apparently has little impact on early marriage or fathering. But, the ability to obtain a good paying job seems to raise the likelihood of marriage and fatherhood. Coming from a high or moderate income family permits young people to wait for a good job. Jobholding by siblings and adults in the family raises the likelihood that young people work. Family influences are as important among black young men living in ghetto areas as among all other youth. Early fatherhood increases work effort of young men who live with their children. But, young absent fathers earn no more than comparable young men who have not fathered a child. Having a child reduces jobholding by young women in ways that vary with their family situations. Young mothers least likely to work are those living with neither spouses nor parents.

#### **Implications of the Family Context for Youth Employment and Training Programs**

The evidence that such a high percentage of unemployed youth, especially minority youth, live with their families and the realization that family members have considerable influence on youth's motivation to work, on their search for jobs, and job retention provides a strong rationale for youth training and employment programs to pay attention to the family context of their clients. To what extent, then, do current programs for disadvantaged youth take into account the family's influence on youth's employment? And what appear to be promising program models and practices that are focussed on families?

It is beyond the scope of this paper to answer these questions fully. However, in informal discussions about these issues with a number of experts on youth employment programs, we gained some interesting insights which we summarize briefly here.<sup>9</sup> The focus in these phone interviews was on programs specifically

designed to provide a comprehensive range of services to disadvantaged youth.

Several broad conclusions emerged from these discussions. Several respondents believed that, in general, youth employment and training programs do not concern themselves with the young enrollees' family situations. One respondent explained, historically these programs developed from a rather mechanistic model, concerned primarily to "relate specific program inputs to client outcomes." Many offered only short term services, such as job search. They did not get to know their clients as whole persons. The program managers would not see what purpose could be achieved in collecting information about an enrollee's family background, circumstances, and responsibilities. Parents of enrollees were generally regarded as either neutral or negative forces on the youth participation in the program. Another respondent noted that, although most programs include a counseling component, it has never been clear what the specific purpose of counseling was. Certainly, the counseling that is offered does not reach out to include other family members.

However, it was made clear in our discussions that among some programs there are signs of changing attitudes and practices toward youth's families. Several program managers are beginning to take an interest in expanding their enrollment to serve young women, and among these, teen mothers in particular. The Job Corps has always collected information on dependents and supplemented their basic, small living allowances with a subsidized dependent allotment sent home for a spouse or child. But the Job Corps is moving further to meet the special needs of teen mothers by redesigning and modifying their basic program. This effort is similar to the Manpower Development Research Corporation's New Chance pilot demonstration programs, discussed below, which target young mothers. Both programs realize the necessity of providing special services, most notably to assist them with finding the child care they need to be able to participate in the program.

There is also some evidence that school dropout programs are making

considerable efforts to get parents involved. In a recent survey, 74 percent of 352 such programs reported that they encouraged parental involvement. The program administrators included parent involvement as one of eight factors that had great or very great influence on program effectiveness (GAO, 1987).

In our phone interviews we learned of a few youth programs which, as part of a complex package of comprehensive services, make a deliberate and sustained effort to work with the parents as well as the young enrollees. The program experts interviewed articulated several purposes of working with parents or other family members:

- o It is important to assess whether the enrollee's family will actively support the program's goals or whether the family's attitudes, expectations, and behavior will, in effect, undermine the enrollee's successful participation in the program.
- o Information provided to, and staff communication with, the enrollee's parent(s) can improve and strengthen the family's support of their youngster and thus reinforce the program goals. Contacts with family may also modify or neutralize family behaviors that interfere with the enrollee's participation and may highlight service needs within the family which can be met by the program or more often through referral.
- o When the young enrollee is a parent, it is even more important to mobilize whatever supports and resources are available within the family and community to help care for the child and support parenting while the enrollee attends the program.
- o One expert suggested that an important aim of counseling the young client and his/her parent would be to enlist the parent's help in enhancing "work maturity skills" such as punctuality, good attendance, good work relations etc.. These skills are one of the youth competencies defined as the goals of the JTPA programs and are seen to be critical to job retention.

The approaches these programs use to work with parents vary, and some are clearly more successful than others. For example, attempts to set up support group meetings or informational sessions for enrollees' parents have not attracted high attendance. However, individual contacts on a case by case basis with family members, especially through home visits or telephone contacts, have been much easier to arrange and seem more effective. To illustrate these general points, we mention briefly some of the specific parent-centered activities described to us.

### Job Corps

The Job Corps, one of the oldest and most successful of national youth employment programs, would seem to be the least likely to have an active interest in working with parents. It is predominantly a residential program, providing intensive comprehensive services for economically disadvantaged youth. Indeed, a "disruptive home life" is one of the five non-income criteria that establish eligibility for the program. We were told that an in-house US Department of Labor study reported that, in 1986, 59 percent of the enrollees were judged by screeners to come from disruptive homes. Thus, one of the Corps' basic assumptions, according to a regional director we interviewed, has been that a principal reason for its success is that the youngsters are taken away from their homes and community environments. Most Job Corps centers have had minimal contact with parents.

Based on his experiences as a former Job Corps director, this respondent told us that he gradually came to the conclusion that the enrollees' parents were greatly underutilized resources. "When I observed the pride and joy of parents on graduation day, who were witnessing perhaps for the first time for years the successful achievement of their child, and when I spoke with the many parents who called to ask if they could come up and visit their youngster, I realized we were making a big mistake in assuming that the parents of economically disadvantaged youth were either bad for them or were disinterested... Moreover, we have to remember that our enrollees are usually sent back to their homes, and we are not doing our job if we haven't prepared them and their families for their return." This director gradually created an active PTA program within the Job Corps. Several, but by no means all, Job Corps centers now have some kind of active parent participation. In these centers, regular newsletters are sent to parents to tell them more about the program in order to help them talk with their youngsters about it. The message of these communications is to encourage parents to participate in the success of their child. Since some centers are far from home,

pictures of their kids are sent home and a special videos are made about the center which can be borrowed by mail.

Retention in the Job Corps is a major problem -- nearly a third of the enrollees drop out within the first three months. Contacts with Job Corps parents can serve another useful function when the enrollee is having difficulty settling down and conforming to the demands of the program. The director said they had found it was useful to let the kids know that the parents are going to be told about these difficulties. "Kids understand that Job Corps staff are short-term in their lives, but parents are forever." In most cases, he continued, when program staff call home to have a conference with the parent about various difficulties and ask the parent to speak with their youngster, the participant is more likely to respond and settle down.

Job Corps II, a new phase of the program, makes a considerable effort to attract young female enrollees and young mothers, in particular, through broadening the range of vocational offerings and forging strong linkages with community agencies that will provide child care to the enrollees. Two new pilot demonstration centers are non-residential. Since the enrollees will usually be living at home, it will be interesting to see if these programs incorporate an even more active parent involvement aspect to the programs than exists in the residential centers.

#### New Chance

The Manpower Development Research Center (MDRC) has launched an ambitious multi-site, pilot demonstration training and employment program for low income, high school dropout young mothers, ages 17-21. The program is multi-faceted and intensive: it builds on several years of carefully evaluated groundwork in the Project Redirection programs for younger mothers. It aims to affect young mothers' motivations to avoid additional childbearing and to improve their long-term employability. The pilot sites are encouraged to involve the young fathers on a case by case basis since "they wield considerable influence over the actions and

attitudes of the women with whom they are linked... and their involvement in New Chance could help to ensure that they do not undercut the program's message and undermine the willingness of the young women to subscribe to the program's goals." (Quint, Polit and Guy, 1986)

It is perhaps surprising that this well-defined rationale for involving the young fathers is not applied to involving the maternal grandmothers, even though young mothers often rely on grandmothers for child care and many young mothers live at home. The New Chance model, we were told, makes no deliberate effort to work with the teenagers' families, although they may do so on a case by case basis especially when there is a troubled relationship. The somewhat limited and sporadic attempts to involve grandmothers in social group activities had not been especially successful in the Project Redirection programs.

However, in one site of the New Chance program, program staff have made a strong effort to involve a "support person," who may be a parent, older sibling, or any other adult, in group orientation meetings and other group activities. Again, they have found that even when small stipends are offered for attendance, the percentage attending the sessions was quite low. It was believed that many of these support persons might have responded to immediate tangible services for themselves, such as job finding and referral, but the program did not offer these services. Nevertheless, staff in this program, who at times had daily phone contact with the enrollees, found that they did have frequent contact by telephone or site visit with the support persons and that this was valuable.

### Teen Parent Centers

The US Departments of Labor and Health and Human Services have collaborated to jointly fund six existing teen parent programs in order to create or strengthen their employment related services. The programs focus on improving the employability of older teen parents, developing specific skills, and forging strong linkages with employers to provide job placement opportunities in the community.

One of these programs strongly emphasizes family involvement and services for family members. The programs counselors, who function as case managers, have caseloads of around 30-35 which enables them to keep in close touch with their clients' progress in the program. One of their responsibilities is to work with the teen clients' families as they cannot "operate in a vacuum" and they need to "obtain the families support" for the program. The counselors make home visits and receive a variety of training experiences to improve their skills in working with clients and their families. Sometimes families are not able to be supportive, but the staff believes it is important to find this out directly for themselves.

An additional employment service affiliated with this teen program, which can be made available to family members as well as the young mothers, is the Carl Perkins Education and Training Program funded by the US Department of Education. This is a special program for single parents and displaced homemakers. Several of the teen clients' mothers have been successfully referred to this program.

#### S.E.R. Jobs for Progress

This national literacy training and skills program operates in 14 states, especially in the Southwest and targets Hispanic youth. It features strong family focus and services to several generations within the family. Written materials describing the program make it clear that the basic assumption is that youth can best be assisted by also working with, and providing assistance to, their families. In addition to specific services for the youth, the core of the program is a network of Family Learning Centers. Each center has a computer-assisted learning system, day care services for enrollees staffed largely by Hispanic grandparents, and a literacy council which involves parents in a variety of ways: governance roles, participation in a series of meetings designed for the parents of high school students who are at risk of dropping out, and literacy classes. Council meetings are designed to help the parents understand the importance of helping their kids stay in school. The program is successful in attracting parents to these activities, largely

because parents are intensely and carefully recruited beforehand by a large cadre of Hispanic volunteers who go out into the communities to talk about the Family Learning Centers, explain the school program, and help Hispanic parents overcome their reluctance to get involved in the schools.

Efforts to involve the families of disadvantaged youth in these ways assume that they will result in benefits for the youth and help to achieve program goals. Since the effects of family involvement in youth employment programs has never been addressed in program evaluation research, we do not know whether this assumption is a correct one. More important, if program evaluations were to focus on family involvement as an independent program variable, it might be possible to identify which kinds of family involvement activities seem to be most cost-effective and in which situations are they contraindicated.

#### **Conclusions and Policy Implications**

While many of our findings are preliminary and require further investigation and analysis, our main conclusion is clear. Public policies aimed at improving the transition of non-college youth to the adult job market must recognize the likely influence of the youth's family context. The specific implications are complicated and hard to sort out. Nevertheless, we suggest several ideas to stimulate discussion, debate, and research:

First of all, policymakers need to ask: Is it desirable for young unemployed adults to be living at home? And, depending on the answer to this question, should policy attempt to encourage or discourage such living arrangements?

The answers are not clear cut. Because of economies of scale of household size and the likelihood of income-sharing among family members, poverty is probably lower if young people remain at home until they can earn adequate incomes. Living at home often widens a young person's access to jobs through information and referrals of parents, other close relatives, and their friends. For young unmarried mothers, living at home usually provides much-needed practical and psychological

support to them and their children.

Among possible negatives of living at home are the psychological and economic strains placed on the parent/youth relationship, the possibility that relatives will serve as poor role models, the loss of privacy, and the chance that young people will take too casual an attitude about seeking employment.

Of course, the choice of living arrangements is a private one that will certainly depend on individual circumstances. Yet, this does not mean that public policy should, or even can, be neutral with regard to such choices. In fact, a number of government policies already provide incentives and apparently influence the living arrangements of young people, although little is known about the nature of this influence. Further, the choice of clients for youth training and unemployment programs may well depend on the family context of young people.

The family perspective outlined in this paper brings an important new dimension to several policy issues concerning non-college-bound youth and raises questions for research and issues for discussion and debate. We sketch a number of these below:

1. The Time Horizon of Youth Employment Policy.

Since large percentages of unemployed or underemployed youth live at home, the immediate economic consequences of their unemployment is not as severe as is often believed. In general, this suggests that policies should focus less on current youth joblessness and more on strategies to raise earnings in the longer run.

The key concern about low youth employment and earnings is the possibility that youth unable to find jobs decide not to form or support families. Having young people wait longer until marriage is not, by itself, necessarily a bad outcome; however, for some groups, the delay in marriage leads to more unmarried mothers and perhaps to permanent increases in one-parent families.

2. Treatment of Income in Income Support Programs.

Much more attention needs to be paid to how policies affect the living arrangements of young people. Program rules for such programs as AFDC, food stamps, and public housing already affect the family incentives of young workers. Income-tested programs vary in the extent to which they count the income of other family members in the household. At least until recently, state policies differed on whether they reduced the grant of young mothers living with their parents on the

assumption that such mothers received in-kind contributions. Proposed new federal rules would prevent minors who become parents from receiving AFDC to set up their own household unless it could be shown that staying with their parents was detrimental. The trade-off between equity and incentives pits helping poor mothers who set up their own household against providing a financial incentive to encourage young mothers to remain with their parents.

3. Treatment of Income in Training and Education Programs.

In an attempt to steer resources for training programs to low income youth, various program rules base eligibility on the income of the youth's family. However, when youth do not live with parents, only their own income is taken into account. This gives an advantage to those who move from home or, at least, report themselves doing so. An alternative might be to count a part of the income of all parents and thus avoid discouraging young people from living with their parents.

4. Child Support Obligations.

Advocates often argue against a strict collection policy for young absent fathers with low earnings. They ask, if a young father earns only \$6,000-8,000 per year, how can he afford to support himself and pay child support as well? A family perspective challenges this assumption. It turns out that most young unmarried fathers live with their families and presumably share expenses with other family members, usually a parent. As Lerman (1987) reports, 54 percent of 19-26 year-old unmarried fathers lived with at least one parent and another 10 percent lived with a sibling or grandparent. Family incomes of fathers living at home averaged about \$23,000-25,000. Thus, even if young men earn only \$6,000 to \$8,000, their contribution of 20-25 percent of their earnings in child support payments would generally not impose severe hardships on them. In any event, their hardships would be less than those of young unmarried mothers, whose family incomes average only about half the family income of unmarried fathers.

Since living at home now tends to permit young men to avoid taking low wage jobs or earning as much as they could earn, a child support requirement might stimulate added earnings. Even for those not currently living at home, strict collection practices might not have severe consequences, given the ability of most young men to share households with other family members.

5. Employment Programs: An Intergenerational Emphasis.

The linkages between the employment status of youth and the work experience of parents and siblings suggests that it might be a good idea if training and employment programs were to offer services to the family unit, not solely the unemployed individual youth or older welfare recipient. In cases where the parents or siblings are also having trouble finding jobs, the provision of placement and job search assistance to parents might have a triple payoff: employing a family head, improving the parental influence on their children's future employment, and encouraging youth to stay at home until they can support themselves.

Similarly, employment and training programs targeted at welfare

recipients might expand their focus to include the unemployed absent father. Employment programs for young absent fathers are beginning to emerge. Most are voluntary, but a new law in Oklahoma imposes a work requirement on absent fathers who do not pay their child support obligations.

6. Parental Support for and Involvement in Youth Employment Programs.

Educators are finding that parent involvement is critical to raising students' achievement levels. Similarly, parent involvement appears to be a promising strategy for programs designed to increase students' employability and work participation. In the previous section, we discussed some of the service delivery approaches that various programs have used to involve parents. Employment counselors expand their role and seek to meet with parents or other close family members, emphasize the need for their support for the goals of their program and advise them on potential occupations for their adolescent children. From the experiences of educators, however, policymakers should be under no illusion that successful parental involvement is easy or inexpensive, although the long run benefits may be immeasurable. Involving parents, especially low income, minority, and non-English speaking parents, takes personnel, time, and training. Requiring or encouraging parental/family involvement in youth employment programs is unlikely to work without the provision of resources for such efforts.

7. Implications for Research.

Our review of existing research has identified major gaps in policy-oriented research. There are also serious gaps in the basic social science literature that is needed to provide an underpinning to policy development. For example, there are virtually no studies that seek to understand the processes by which parents and other family members from different class and ethnic/cultural backgrounds socialize their non-college-bound children and teenagers for the world of work, prepare them for the choice of careers, and help them find and keep their jobs. If we understood better how some families succeed in helping their sons/daughters get employment, we might be able to design more effective programs, and assist some parents to be more effective in this role.

Similarly, few studies explore the reciprocal economic relationship between parents and young adults, especially when they are living together, or attempt to isolate the independent effect of family status or policy incentives on youth's employment or living in the parental household.

At this point, the debate on the family aspect of policies aimed at 18-24 year-olds is still general and tentative. More needs to be learned. But the findings reviewed in this paper should make policymakers and program administrators more aware of the potential significance of the family's role in helping young people enter the adult job market.

Table 1: Living Arrangements of 21-24 Year-Olds  
by Sex and Race: 1986

| Household Living<br>Arrangement                  | Male     |       |       | Female   |       |       |
|--------------------------------------------------|----------|-------|-------|----------|-------|-------|
|                                                  | Hispanic | Black | White | Hispanic | Black | White |
| (percentage distribution by living arrangements) |          |       |       |          |       |       |
| Living Alone                                     | 8.8      | 12.8  | 13.2  | 3.6      | 6.1   | 7.1   |
| With Spouse, No Child                            | 8.2      | 5.6   | 11.9  | 12.4     | 6.7   | 18.3  |
| With Spouse, Own Child                           | 17.4     | 10.4  | 13.5  | 28.3     | 17.5  | 22.7  |
| Parent, No Own Child                             | 45.3     | 44.5  | 39.4  | 26.1     | 20.6  | 24.7  |
| Parent and Own Child                             | 1.3      | 1.6   | .1    | 4.2      | 16.8  | 2.0   |
| Own Child, No Parent                             | 3.7      | 3.7   | .6    | 14.0     | 21.4  | 6.9   |
| Sibling or Grandparent                           | 5.8      | 9.6   | 3.3   | 3.1      | 4.9   | 2.5   |
| Partner Opposite Sex                             | 2.8      | 3.8   | 4.5   | 4.0      | 2.0   | 6.9   |
| Other Relative                                   | .7       | 2.5   | .5    | .3       | 1.9   | .4    |
| Nonrelative                                      | 6.0      | 5.4   | 13.0  | 4.0      | 2.0   | 8.5   |
| <u>Alternative Grouping</u>                      |          |       |       |          |       |       |
| Alone, with Partner<br>or Nonrelative            | 15.5     | 22.0  | 30.7  | 11.6     | 10.1  | 22.5  |
| Spouse, with or<br>without Child                 | 25.6     | 16.0  | 25.4  | 40.7     | 24.2  | 41.0  |
| Parents, Other<br>Relatives                      | 53.1     | 58.2  | 43.3  | 33.7     | 44.2  | 29.6  |
| Own Child, No Parent<br>or Spouse                | 3.7      | 3.7   | 0.6   | 14.0     | 21.4  | 6.9   |
| Total (in thousands)                             | 547      | 1,144 | 5,318 | 490      | 1,099 | 5,110 |

Note: The living arrangements are hierarchical in the sense that a person is placed in the first household situation which applies. Thus, a person classified as living with a spouse and no child may also live with a parent, sibling, or other relative.

Source: Unpublished tabulations by authors from NLS.

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Table 2: Living Arrangements of 21-24 Year-Olds by Race,  
Sex, and Enrollment Status: 1986

| Enrollment Status.<br>Household Living<br>Arrangement | Male                       |       |       | Female   |       |       |
|-------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------|-------|----------|-------|-------|
|                                                       | Hispanic                   | Black | White | Hispanic | Black | White |
| <hr/>                                                 |                            |       |       |          |       |       |
| High School Dropouts                                  | (percentage distributions) |       |       |          |       |       |
| Living Alone                                          | 1.8                        | 9.5   | 4.7   | .9       | 3.0   | 2.6   |
| With Spouse, No Child                                 | 7.5                        | 4.7   | 7.9   | 2.7      | 1.5   | 9.5   |
| With Spouse, Own Child                                | 24.0                       | 6.7   | 25.6  | 36.5     | 19.0  | 45.3  |
| Parent, No Own Child                                  | 45.9                       | 46.8  | 34.4  | 22.0     | 13.5  | 9.3   |
| Parent and Own Child                                  | 1.1                        | 2.9   | .1    | 6.0      | 22.2  | 21.6  |
| Own Child, No Parent                                  | 6.8                        | 6.5   | 2.0   | 23.3     | 32.8  | 19.8  |
| Sibling or Grandparent                                | 5.2                        | 13.2  | 8.5   | 3.3      | .0    | 1.6   |
| Partner Opposite Sex                                  | 4.5                        | 4.5   | 7.1   | 4.3      | 2.4   | 5.7   |
| Other Relative                                        | .7                         | 1.5   | 1.8   | .0       | 4.1   | 0.2   |
| Nonrelative                                           | 2.4                        | 3.7   | 7.9   | 1.1      | 1.5   | 3.4   |
| Total (in thousands)                                  | 165                        | 248   | 892   | 120      | 165   | 665   |
| <hr/>                                                 |                            |       |       |          |       |       |
| In College                                            |                            |       |       |          |       |       |
| Living Alone                                          | 11.9                       | 11.1  | 12.3  | 4.1      | 12.0  | 12.0  |
| With Spouse, No Child                                 | 5.8                        | 8.8   | 4.1   | 9.6      | 2.4   | 8.8   |
| With Spouse, Own Child                                | 5.3                        | 1.4   | 2.9   | 5.0      | 6.8   | 4.4   |
| Parent, No Own Child                                  | 53.8                       | 53.2  | 51.2  | 61.2     | 42.7  | 45.5  |
| Parent and Own Child                                  | .0                         | .0    | .0    | 5.4      | 4.0   | 1.0   |
| Own Child, No Parent                                  | 1.9                        | .0    | .0    | 3.8      | 7.3   | .9    |
| Sibling or Grandparent                                | .0                         | 10.9  | 1.8   | 2.3      | 13.2  | 2.7   |
| Partner Opposite Sex                                  | 1.0                        | .6    | 2.5   | 1.5      | 1.5   | 8.7   |
| Other Relative                                        | .0                         | .6    | .5    | 1.1      | 1.2   | .5    |
| Nonrelative                                           | 20.2                       | 13.4  | 24.6  | 6.0      | 8.8   | 15.5  |
| Total (in thousands)                                  | 62                         | 130   | 1,311 | 66       | 132   | 1,160 |
| <hr/>                                                 |                            |       |       |          |       |       |
| High School Graduates<br>Not Enrolled                 |                            |       |       |          |       |       |
| Living Alone                                          | 12.2                       | 14.3  | 15.3  | 4.6      | 5.9   | 6.5   |
| With Spouse, No Child                                 | 9.3                        | 5.4   | 15.2  | 17.0     | 8.7   | 22.2  |
| With Spouse, Own Child                                | 16.4                       | 13.1  | 14.2  | 29.9     | 18.0  | 24.1  |
| Parent, No Own Child                                  | 42.7                       | 42.2  | 36.8  | 20.3     | 18.7  | 21.5  |
| Parent and Own Child                                  | 1.6                        | 1.5   | .1    | 3.2      | 18.1  | 2.2   |
| Own Child, No Parent                                  | 2.5                        | 3.5   | .4    | 12.3     | 21.5  | 6.5   |
| Sibling or Grandparent                                | 7.4                        | 8.1   | 2.7   | 3.2      | 4.7   | 2.7   |
| Partner Opposite Sex                                  | 2.3                        | 4.1   | 4.5   | 4.5      | 2.1   | 6.5   |
| Other Relative                                        | .9                         | 3.2   | .3    | .3       | 1.5   | 0.5   |
| Nonrelative                                           | 4.8                        | 4.7   | 10.4  | 4.8      | 1.0   | 7.4   |
| Total (in thousands)                                  | 312                        | 762   | 4,095 | 302      | 789   | 4,276 |

Note: See note to Table 1. College students living in a dormitory, fraternity, or sorority are classified as living in their permanent off-campus household.

Source: Unpublished tabulations by authors from NLS.

Table 3: Poverty Status by Family Status  
Of Young Men and Women by Race: 1985

|                        | Male                    |       |       | Female   |       |       |
|------------------------|-------------------------|-------|-------|----------|-------|-------|
|                        | Hispanic                | Black | White | Hispanic | Black | white |
|                        | (percentage in poverty) |       |       |          |       |       |
| Living Alone           | 16.5                    | 23.3  | 16.1  | 16.4     | 30.1  | 15.3  |
| With Spouse and Child  | 7.8                     | 3.3   | 4.3   | 7.1      | 4.8   | 3.1   |
| With Spouse No Child   | 21.9                    | 15.5  | 17.0  | 20.8     | 19.3  | 9.0   |
| Parent, No Child       | 15.5                    | 23.8  | 4.1   | 17.2     | 21.7  | 3.1   |
| Parent and Child       | 26.9                    | 41.2  | 6.9   | 49.8     | 52.6  | 19.9  |
| Own Child, No Parent   | 34.0                    | 40.6  | 47.2  | 61.9     | 72.2  | 53.4  |
| Sibling or Grandparent | 22.8                    | 29.0  | 16.4  | 21.6     | 15.9  | 04.5  |
| Partner Opposite Sex   | 29.5                    | 20.7  | 16.2  | 22.8     | 46.7  | 30.9  |
| Other Relative         | 0.0                     | 22.9  | 25.9  | 00.0     | 63.6  | 29.0  |
| Nonrelative            | 21.9                    | 20.7  | 27.3  | 21.5     | 54.4  | 26.8  |
| Total (in thousands)   | 179                     | 229   | 117   | 250      | 384   | 131   |

Note: See note to Table 1.

Source: Same as Table 1.

Table 4: Income of Family of High School Graduates,  
Ages 21-24, by Race, Sex, and Living Arrangements: 1986

|                      | Male     |          |          | Female   |          |          |
|----------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
|                      | Hispanic | Black    | White    | Hispanic | Black    | White    |
| Living Alone         | \$18,775 | \$10,837 | \$16,379 | \$11,848 | \$10,461 | \$13,257 |
| With Spouse No Child | 22,677   | 24,198   | 26,315   | 26,475   | 23,791   | 29,156   |
| With Spouse, Child   | 20,722   | 19,956   | 22,437   | 23,944   | 22,039   | 25,151   |
| Parent, No Child     | 38,225   | 28,186   | 45,203   | 42,032   | 29,352   | 45,020   |
| Parent and Child     | 20,002   | 26,768   | 17,213   | 19,517   | 19,281   | 38,885   |
| Own Child, No Parent | 12,521   | 13,813   | 11,212   | 8,263    | 8,241    | 10,453   |
| Sibling, Grandparent | 20,831   | 20,506   | 28,757   | 23,973   | 21,981   | 27,645   |
| Partner Opposite Sex | 16,816   | 10,110   | 14,096   | 10,121   | 8,484    | 10,031   |
| Other Relative       | 30,000   | 21,614   | 30,000   | -----    | 9,939    | 4,320    |
| Nonrelative          | 10,872   | 11,906   | 16,224   | 11,718   | 8,789    | 13,671   |
| Total                | \$26,463 | \$20,841 | \$28,424 | \$23,287 | \$18,144 | \$26,149 |

Note: See note to Table 1.

Source: Same as Table 1.

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Table 5: Employment-Population Ratio of High School Graduates  
Not Enrolled, by Sex, and Race: 1986

|                        | Male     |       |       | Female   |       |       |
|------------------------|----------|-------|-------|----------|-------|-------|
|                        | Hispanic | Black | White | Hispanic | Black | White |
| Living Alone           | .974     | .831  | .924  | .749     | .923  | .907  |
| With Spouse No Child   | .939     | .959  | .927  | .888     | .762  | .868  |
| With Spouse, Child     | .922     | .923  | .921  | .529     | .646  | .607  |
| Parent, No Child       | .788     | .692  | .792  | .812     | .779  | .905  |
| Parent and Child       | 1.000    | .921  | —     | .541     | .506  | .838  |
| Own Child, No Parent   | .876     | 1.000 | .769  | .334     | .536  | .681  |
| Sibling or Grandparent | .838     | .696  | .733  | .886     | .749  | .747  |
| Partner Opposite Sex   | .682     | .856  | .919  | .728     | .924  | .896  |
| Other Relative         | 1.000    | .757  | .906  | 1.000    | .619  | .744  |
| Nonrelative            | .901     | .881  | .886  | 1.000    | .647  | .959  |
| Total                  | .861     | .789  | .864  | .678     | .658  | .807  |

Note: See note to Table 1.

Source: Same as Table 1.

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Table 6: Living Arrangements of Employed and Not Employed  
Out of School, High School Graduates, Ages 21-24 by Race and Sex: 1986

|                                                | Male     |       |       | Female   |       |       |
|------------------------------------------------|----------|-------|-------|----------|-------|-------|
|                                                | Hispanic | Black | White | Hispanic | Black | White |
| (percentage distribution by employment status) |          |       |       |          |       |       |
| Not Employed                                   |          |       |       |          |       |       |
| Living Alone                                   | 2.3      | 11.4  | 8.6   | 3.6      | 1.3   | 3.1   |
| With Spouse, No Child                          | 4.1      | 1.1   | 8.2   | 5.9      | 6.0   | 15.2  |
| With Spouse and Child                          | 9.1      | 4.8   | 8.3   | 43.7     | 18.6  | 49.3  |
| Parent, No Child                               | 65.0     | 61.6  | 56.3  | 11.9     | 12.1  | 10.6  |
| Parent, Own Child                              | .0       | .6    | 1.0   | 4.6      | 26.1  | 1.8   |
| Own Child, No Parent                           | 2.2      | .0    | .7    | 25.4     | 29.2  | 10.7  |
| Sibling or Grandparent                         | 8.6      | 11.6  | 5.3   | 1.1      | 3.4   | 3.5   |
| Partner Opposite Sex                           | 5.3      | 2.8   | 2.7   | 3.8      | .5    | 3.5   |
| Other Relative                                 | .0       | 3.6   | .2    | .0       | 1.7   | .6    |
| Nonrelative                                    | 3.4      | 2.6   | 8.7   | .0       | 1.1   | 1.6   |
| Total (in thousands)                           | 44       | 161   | 556   | 97       | 269   | 824   |
| Employed                                       |          |       |       |          |       |       |
| Living Alone                                   | 13.8     | 15.0  | 16.4  | 5.0      | 8.2   | 7.2   |
| With Spouse, No Child                          | 10.1     | 6.6   | 16.4  | 22.3     | 10.0  | 23.9  |
| Spouse and Child                               | 17.5     | 15.4  | 15.1  | 23.3     | 17.6  | 18.1  |
| Parent, No Child                               | 39.1     | 37.0  | 33.7  | 24.3     | 22.1  | 24.1  |
| Parent, Own Child                              | 1.9      | 1.7   | .0    | 2.6      | 13.9  | 2.2   |
| Own Child, No Parent                           | 2.6      | 4.4   | .4    | 6.0      | 17.5  | 5.5   |
| Sibling or Grandparent                         | 7.2      | 7.1   | 2.3   | 4.2      | 5.3   | 2.5   |
| Partner Opposite Sex                           | 1.8      | 4.4   | 4.8   | 4.8      | 2.9   | 7.3   |
| Other Relative                                 | 1.0      | 3.0   | .3    | .5       | 1.4   | .4    |
| Nonrelative                                    | 5.0      | 5.2   | 10.7  | 7.1      | 1.0   | 8.8   |
| Total (in thousands)                           | 269      | 601   | 3,539 | 205      | 519   | 3,452 |

Note: See note to Table 1.

Source: Same as Table 1.

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## Notes

1. See, for example, Coleman, 1966, Jencks, 1972; Sewall, Hauser and Featherman, eds. 1976; Rosenfeld, 1980.
2. Youniss' paper does consider some of these issues with respect to divorced families.
3. See especially several excellent review: Clark, 1983; Leichter, 1974; Scott-Jones, 1984; Linney and Vernberg, 1983.
4. Unfortunately, the family's influence sometimes becomes a negative one. Older siblings or others in the family may encourage or fail to deter a young person from engaging in illegal employment activities, such as drug dealing.
5. Like any tax, the child support obligation will exert offsetting effects; lowering the father's net income will tend to increase work effort, while lowering the net return to work will tend to reduce work effort.
6. For a detailed description of the NLS, see Center for Human Resource Research, 1987.
7. Also, see their essay as Chapter 3 in Wilson's new book (1987).
8. The structure of benefits varies because of state policy differences in the treatment of income of other relatives for purposes of determining payments under the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program (see Hutchens, Jackubson, and Schwartz, 1986, Chapter 2).
9. Those interviewed by telephone were: Steve Aaronson (Youth Corps), Gordon Carlson (Youth Corps), Byrna Fraser (National Institute for Work and Learning), Pat Jackson (New Chance), David Lah (Department of Labor), Amy Loomis (TAPP San Francisco), Fred Romero (S.E.R.), and Janet Quint (New Chance/MDRC). We are grateful to them for sharing their experiences and views with us. However, the authors accept all responsibility for the interpretations and views expressed in this paper.

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

**Robert I. Lerman** is an economist on the faculty of the Heller Graduate School, Brandeis University. His studies concentrate on issues of poverty and welfare, as well as youth unemployment and training policies. In addition to research at academic institutions, he has helped to develop public policies at the Congressional Joint Economic Committee and at the US Department of Labor. His most recent work deals with young absent fathers, child support payments, and using job-based education to raise the earnings potential of young black men.

**Theodora Ooms, M.S.W.**, has been with the Family Impact Seminar\* since 1976, its Director since 1982. Her major policy research interests have been adolescent pregnancy and parenthood and the relationship of families and schools. Her publications include a book she edited, Teenage Pregnancy in a Family Context: Implications for Policy (1981), and the report of a project she directed, sponsored by the US Departments of Health and Human Services and Labor, Unwed Fathers: Research Review, Policy Dilemmas and Options (1988). She is co-author with A. Sidney Johnson of a forthcoming monograph commissioned by the Project on the Federal Social Role titled Taking Families Seriously: A Challenge for Social Policy.

Prior to coming to Washington, Ms. Ooms worked directly with families and children as a social worker, family therapist, and administrator at the Philadelphia Child Guidance Clinic and at the Child Study Center at Yale University.

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\* The Family Impact Seminar became the policy program of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy's Research and Education Foundation in January 1988. Its previous homes have been at the Catholic University of America and the Institute for Educational Leadership.

## A COMMENTARY

on Robert Lerman and Theodore Ooms'

### FAMILY INFLUENCES ON TRANSITIONS TO THE ADULT JOB MARKET

by Frank F. Furstenberg

#### Finding Work: How Much Can Families Help?

Robert Lerman and Theodora Ooms's paper exploring how families influence the transition of young adults into the labor force pursues a set of ambitious goals: 1) to portray how changes in the American family are influencing young people's entrance in the workplace; 2) to show how parental involvement shapes employment patterns; 3) to examine reciprocal family responsibilities of working and non-working youth and their parents; and 4) to propose how public policy might strengthen parental involvement and enhance the economic future of young adults. And as if this were not enough, Lerman and Ooms appear to have an even larger agenda in mind. They encourage policymakers to examine appropriate and desirable living arrangements for young adults and determine what role the family should have in promoting these arrangements and how public policy might give economically disadvantaged parents a stronger hand in helping their children to make a successful transition to adulthood.

These are lofty and laudable aims. Unfortunately, existing research provides a rather poor guide to answering most questions posed in the Lerman/Ooms paper, much less gaining a firm purchase on the larger question of how to provide poorer families with greater resources to help their children negotiate a successful transition to the labor force. Indeed, much of the paper is an exercise in creative extrapolation from limited, inadequate, and often questionable evidence. Lerman and

Ooms should not be faulted for undertaking what must have been a frustrating review of weak evidence, but the reader is left in some doubt as to whether the policy recommendations can be justified by the empirical evidence.

Yet, I suspect that the authors would be satisfied if their paper provokes a more searching examination of the question of the family's role in launching children from the nest. My comments are to be taken in that spirit. I hope to sharpen some issues they raise in their paper. Ultimately, I question their concluding proposition that assisting families, through the provision of social services and family counseling, is a potentially efficient and productive strategy for helping non-college-bound youth to find stable and remunerative employment.

A good portion of their paper is devoted to examining the changing pattern of "nest leaving" that has emerged in the twentieth century. At several points, they note a series of demographic and social trends that have altered the timing of entrance into the labor force and the associated pattern of emancipation from the parental household. Using data both from secondary sources and from a recent wave of the National Longitudinal Survey of Young Adults, the authors show that over the past several decades, a growing proportion of youth are delaying marriage and living with their families. This pattern of "delayed nest leaving," especially conspicuous among blacks and Hispanic males, frames Lerman and Ooms' discussion of the potential for greater family influence on the work lives of young adults.

In fact, the evidence for an increasingly prolonged period of semi-independence among young adults is contradictory. Have we seen a change in the timing of emancipation from the family? The notion of a steady trend toward later household departure in the post-war period is misleading.

As Lerman and Ooms acknowledge, until the twentieth century, a substantial proportion of youth resided with their families late into their twenties. Later age

of marriage, bouts of unemployment, family responsibilities, scarce economic resources, and limited housing probably all contributed to a protracted exit from the parental household in the 19th and early 20th century (Modell and Hareven in Gordon, 1987; Hareven, 1987). Whether parents, a century ago, more effectively managed their children's economic prospects as a result is not known. Certainly, in some communities, kin provided an important bridge to industrial and agricultural jobs, but high rates of geographical mobility must have limited the family's role as an economic sponsor. Limited opportunities may well have forced young people to search elsewhere for work. Co-residence of parents and their adult children does not demonstrate family influence in the 19th century any more than it does in the late 20th century.

In the middle of this century, following the Depression and World War II, a dramatic decrease in co-residence occurred. The sudden drop in marriage age greatly altered living arrangements. Scholars really do not understand baby boom origins, but it seems likely that a fusion of cultural currents supporting greater autonomy of young adults (perhaps prompted by wartime mobilization), economic optimism, and greater availability of low-cost housing produced a sharp increase in family formation at young ages (Cherlin, 1981). Median marriage age dropped by nearly two years from 1940 to 1960, which meant that by their early twenties, if not late teens, the typical young adult had established an independent household. For example, three quarters of all non-Hispanic white females born in the 1930s and early 1940s were married by age 23, and three quarters of all males were married by 26. (Blacks married somewhat later and were somewhat less likely to move out of the home when they wed. (Sweet and Bumpass, 1988)

The decline in marriage age lasted until the mid-1960s when the trend toward early marriage suddenly reversed. The recent steep rise in marriage age over the

past 25 years, as Lerman and Ooms note, has led to an increase of youth in their mid-twenties living with their parents. However, if we discount the changing marriage patterns, "nest leaving" has been occurring at earlier, not later ages. Among the growing ranks of single young adults, an increased proportion are leaving home prior to marriage and at earlier ages. Sweet and Bumpass (1988), in a recent monograph on the changing American family, show a significant decline in co-residence with parents among whites. The pattern among blacks is less clear cut, especially for those in their late teens and early twenties. As they sum up the current situation:

So what has happened is somewhat paradoxical. It is true that, at every age, more unmarried young adults are living "on their own." However, from the perspective of parents who may be longing for the day when their "nest" is empty and they are again "on their own," it is also true that adult children are remaining in the parental household longer now than in the past. This is true because marriage, which has traditionally been the major "reason" for leaving home, has been significantly delayed (pp. 92-93).

Francis Goldscheider and her colleagues, who have explored changing patterns of nest leaving, are convinced that marriage trends are in fact covering up a dramatic shift in household composition (Goldscheider and DaVanzo, 1985; Waite, Goldscheider, and Witsberger, 1986; Goldscheider and Waite, 1987). More than ever before, never-married youth seek residential autonomy from their parents or engage in experiences that promote such autonomy such as living away from home during schooling, military experience, or cohabitation. While many young adults return to their parents' household for a time after these transitional events, the net effect of living apart, even temporarily, is to increase the taste for autonomy. Waite, Goldscheider and Witsberger (1986), in an analysis of the NLS data, show that this growing pattern of residential independence from the parental household may contribute to the development of non-traditional family attitudes.

Thus, the picture of a growing potential for greater parental influence,

suggested by Lerman and Ooms, is not well supported by other investigators. True, the rising age of marriage encourages later co-residence, but unmarried youth are apparently more than ever inclined to emancipate themselves from the family. Other data suggest that part of the impetus for this trend may be attitudinal. Both parents and children endorse the idea that adult children should not live with their families.

How young adults and their parents negotiate the transition to a separate residence and how this process of nestleaving is related to the employment experiences of youth is not well understood. Presumably, most parents and their children are inclined to separate in their early twenties. Sweet and Bumpass (1988) show a steady drop in co-residence from about half of all households at age 20 to roughly 10 percent at age 25. According to Goldscheider and her colleagues, other than marriage, which is the principal event precipitating movement outside the household, various sources contribute to emancipation. Age itself is an important determinant of nestleaving. This suggests a strong normative component in the separation of parents and their young adult children.

Despite the seemingly relentless increase in the taste for autonomy, it is nonetheless interesting to inquire, as Lerman and Ooms attempt to do, what the implications are when young adults live with their parents. What do we know about the behavior of families with young adults in the household? Not much, according to the evidence reviewed by Lerman and Ooms. For example, we do not even learn how often such arrangements are mutually desired. Are parents encouraging their children to remain in the home or do they, as Sweet and Bumpass suggest in the passage quoted above, long for the day when their children move out? Similarly, are youth content to remain in their parents' households or do they regard co-residence as a necessary, and perhaps humiliating, postponement of adulthood?

What do young adults contribute in material and in-kind resources to their parents? The only data cited by Lerman and Ooms on the modest pooling of earnings from youth comes from studies of high school students. Clearly, this does not tell us anything about the contributions of young adults in their twenties. Information on the exchange patterns of young adults could be obtained from the recent national household survey conducted by the University of Wisconsin or, to a more limited extent, from the Census Bureau's ongoing Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), which is designed to examine income exchanges within households.

Part of the problem in measuring patterns of exchange between young adults and their parents is that the relationship may be transitory. Lerman and Ooms provide a snapshot of the number of 21-24 year-olds based on tabulations of the National Longitudinal Survey (NLS). This cross-sectional information is not very informative for it fails to capture the extent of movement in and out of the household. Given the steep age drop in co-residence of young adults in the parental household, an immense amount of movement is taking place on an annual basis. Since the NLS reinterviewed the young adults every year for the past decade, these data could, if analyzed longitudinally, answer some questions posed in the Lerman and Ooms paper. For example, it should be possible to discover whether parental attributes and resources influence the timing of a youth's transition to the labor force. With longitudinal analysis, it may also be possible to compare the labor market experiences of comparable cohorts of youth residing with their parents and independently. Does it benefit or retard the economic careers of non-college-bound youth if they remain in the parental household?

My hunch, based on various studies which I have conducted, is that most of a parent's influence occurs relatively early and is largely indirect, through schooling

and neighborhood. Parents locate youth in an opportunity structure, largely through educational opportunities. To be sure, they also have a direct effect by modeling adult roles, monitoring youth, and providing support and encouragement. I would suspect that, on these points, there is agreement between Lerman and Ooms and me. We diverge more on the prospects of extending family influence beyond the adolescent years. I suspect that the family influence is relatively small by the time youth are in their late teens and early twenties.

In studies of teenage parents who live with their parents for a time following the transition to parenthood and divorcees who move back home following the breakup of their marriages, co-residence is viewed as a temporary arrangement (Furstenberg and Crawford, 1978; Furstenberg and Cherlin, 1986). Young adults may be grateful for assistance rendered, or they may be ambivalent, if not openly negative, about sharing quarters with their parents. But, it would appear that most young adults and their parents view co-residence as a limited-lease arrangement.

Surely, real and ongoing exchanges are established even when co-residence is short-term and transient. The question then arises whether parents or extended family members can and do provide meaningful assistance in helping their youth to find secure employment. As far as I know, and Lerman and Ooms appear to agree, no data are available to provide a satisfactory answer to this question. However, it strikes me as farfetched to believe that co-residence with parents or other family members figures importantly one way or the other in affecting a young person's chances of securing a good job. I do not doubt that family members can sometimes be helpful in locating employment, though I suspect the assistance provided is unrelated to whether the young person is living in the home or not. Increasingly, I would argue, good jobs are not located through the family but through educational sponsors or peers.

Some data on the consequences of co-residence are available from a longitudinal study of teenage parents which I and my colleagues, Brooke Gunn and Philip Morgan, recently completed. The Baltimore study followed a group of nearly 300 mothers and their children for a period of nearly 20 years. Based on comparisons with national data, it would appear that the women in the Baltimore study are fairly representative of black teen mothers, but the findings do not tell us about whites or Hispanics. (For a detailed description of the Baltimore study, see Furstenberg, Brooks-Gunn, and Morgan, 1987.)

It is widely believed that teen mothers do better educationally and economically when they live with parents after their child is born than if they establish independent residence. Findings from the Baltimore study indicate a more complicated pattern. Women who spent three or more years residing with their parents actually were less likely to be economically secure in their mid-thirties than women who moved out of the familial household more quickly. In part, these findings may be spurious because the women who successfully married moved out more quickly and the refugees from unsuccessful marriages often returned home. Moreover, women with few skills and limited training were more likely to get stuck in the parental household.

Sometimes, three generation arrangements worked to the benefit of all involved. Young parents received mentoring, support, and assistance from kin, and family members, in turn, got favors from the young parent and satisfaction from raising the child. Just as often, however, the costs of the arrangement were evident. Frequently, family members felt exploited by the young mother, and resources that might have gone to siblings were syphoned off to help mother and child (Furstenberg, 1981). Our findings resonated with some accounts of family life which reveal that complex households often generated tensions and strained

resources (Hareven, 1987).

Lerman and Ooms, it seems to me, primarily address their attention to one side of the coin. They focus on the potential benefits of family support for young adults, but speak rather little of the costs to other family members of sustaining the young adults. I am not concluding that the costs necessarily outweigh the advantages but suggesting that the family represents a diverse and sometimes competing set of interests.

This perspective leads me to quite different conclusions from those reached by Lerman and Ooms. First, I am not at all persuaded, as Lerman and Ooms appear to be, that policymakers should take a position on whether or not to encourage co-residence of young adults and their families. Unless there is a compelling public interest to do so, we ought to be cautious about trying to promote or deter particular family arrangements. I see insufficient evidence in this case for putting our collective thumbs on the scale in an effort to encourage co-residence. Moreover, there is little reason to believe that even if we decided to foster (or discourage) co-residence, these efforts would have much success.

Second, I see little evidence in the Lerman and Ooms paper for justifying an increased attention to job-training programs that involve family members. Advocating family involvement has a strong political appeal. But it is a difficult and costly strategy to implement. Some years ago, strenuous efforts were made to encourage greater family involvement in sex education and family planning programs. I have seen little evidence that these programs successfully recruited large numbers of parents or that parental involvement in such programs affected the sexual and contraceptive patterns of young people. Drumming up similar support for job-training programs poses many of the same obstacles that appeared when family planning services attempted to involve parents. Few parents will become interested,

those that do are a self-selected group who often least need the program resources, staff time is diverted to serving a small number of clients, and ultimately there is little to show for their efforts.

Would I make any efforts to reach out to the families? Certainly, providing information about the aims and procedures of programs is appropriate and desirable. Beyond that, I would need more evidence that services to family members would increase the employment prospects of young adults before I devoted scarce resources to such an effort.

In the coming decade, we will surely witness a renewed interest in social experiments to strengthen family units. Helping children by helping their parents is an eminently sensible proposition. Certainly, there is good reason to believe that children's chances in later life improve when parents are stably employed, reside in adequate housing, and live in neighborhoods with effective schools and social services. Thus, I agree with Lerman and Ooms that the family is an appropriate target for intervention. The unsettled issue is what services should be provided and at which points in the family life cycle. It is tempting to say let's do it all, but obviously priorities must be set if only for lack of resources.

Although little attention is given to research needs in the concluding section of their paper, Lerman and Ooms make a strong case for further exploration of the process of transition to the labor force. How directly is the family implicated in the young adult's early efforts to secure employment? One promising and relatively inexpensive approach to further investigation is mining the rich data available from numerous longitudinal surveys of adolescents and young adults. There is an equally pressing need to collect good ethnographic data on the family transactions around youth employment. Until we arrive at a better understanding of the transition to work, we are in a weak position to decide what public policies involving the

family's role should be advocated.

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### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Frank F. Furstenberg, Jr. is Professor of Sociology and Research Associate in the Population Studies Center at the University of Pennsylvania. His interest in the American family began at Columbia University where he received his Ph.D. in 1967. His most recent book include: Recycling the Family with Graham Spanier (1984), The New American Grandparent with Andrew J. Cherlin (1986) and Adolescent Mothers in Later Life with J. Brooks-Gunn and S. Philip Morgan (1987). He has published articles on teenage sexuality, pregnancy and childbearing as well as on divorce, remarriage, and stepparenting. Presently he is conducting a longitudinal study with Morgan and Brooks-Gunn of poverty across generations. Much of Professor Furstenberg's research concerns the interplay between social change in the family and public policies. He is also writing a book about the impact of divorce on children.

## **A COMMENTARY**

**on Robert Lerman and Theodora Ooms'**

### **FAMILY INFLUENCES ON TRANSITIONS TO THE ADULT JOB MARKET**

**by Margaret C. Simms**

The basic premise of this thoughtful study by Lerman and Ooms is that families influence the attitudes and behavior of youths in the labor market. This premise is at once obvious and at the same time a revelation. It is readily apparent from casual observation that most young people, especially those still in their teen years, are living in family units. However, as noted by the authors, this fact has not been acknowledged in the development of youth employment and training programs. The question for analysis is: how do families influence youth and how can these impacts be incorporated in a positive way into a job/training program context?

#### **Employment Problems of Youth**

While the Lerman-Ooms paper does not explicitly focus on racial differences in employment (although racial and ethnic differences are acknowledged), an examination of youth employment data reveals clearly that a youth employment problem does not exist across the board. Over the past thirty years, the proportion of the employed white youth population has risen significantly. That has not been the case for black youth.

In 1987, approximately one-half of all white teens were employed, compared to just over one-quarter of all black teens. Among males, white teens increased their jobholding rates slightly, while the proportion of black teens with jobs dropped by about a third. Among females, whites saw tremendous increases in their jobholding rates while blacks made modest advances. Among males in the 20-24 age group, the gap in the employment-population ratio increased from 5 percentage points (76 vs.

71) to 12 percentage points (80 vs. 62). For females in the same age group, the difference grew from 3 percentage points to 20. These racial differences, which do not disappear completely even when education and other significant factors are held constant, suggest that a careful examination of racial differences is necessary when reviewing the data presented in the Lerman-Ooms study.

#### **Family Roles in Youth's Transitions to the Adult Labor Force**

At age 18, family influence is both historical and contemporary. That is, the youth has been living in the family for his/her formative years and attitudes toward work have been shaped by what the person has been told, has observed others doing, and has been forced/encouraged to do over the years. In addition, those young people who are still living in a family continue to be influenced by current pressures of responsibility, examples set by family members, and alternatives available to them. In their literature review, Lerman and Ooms attempt to pull together what is known about how the family context affects youth attitudes and behavior.

In a variety of ways, families can/do affect these attitudes and behavior. The most basic is the role of aspirations and expectations. What do parents want or expect their children to do? In fact, most parents want their children to do well in life. It is unusual to find parents who do not want their children to get an education, to have a good job, etc. There may, however, be differences in expectations. That is, parents -- regardless of income or own life circumstances-- may want their children to do well, but their expectations may be tempered by the resources that they are able to provide.

In light of these possible differences, it is useful to examine what opinion surveys and longitudinal studies reveal about aspirations and expectations. Each year, the Joint Center for Political Studies (JCPS) sponsors a poll that is conducted

jointly with the Gallup Organization. In 1987, a section of the survey addressed questions of family and attitudes toward marriage, children, and work. Two questions are particularly pertinent this discussion.<sup>1</sup> One dealt with educational expectations. Each respondent was asked "How much education do you think your (youngest) child will have when he or she stops going to school?" Despite significant income differences between the black and white samples, the majority of both groups, 55% of blacks and 60% of whites, expected their child to complete four or more years of college. Since the question deals with expectations and not aspirations, these answers should reflect what parents think is possible for their children to accomplish.

These aspirations and expectations do seem to have an impact on the children, at least at some level. Both the National Longitudinal Surveys (NLS) of Young Men and Young Women conducted in the 1960s and the 1979 NLS youth cohort reveal few differences in educational aspirations and expectations among black and white youth. If anything, adjustments for income differences reveal that blacks have higher educational aspirations/expectations than whites.<sup>2</sup>

The other relevant question in the JCPS-Gallup survey asks respondents to state "at what age should a child be encouraged to get a part-time job?" Again, there are remarkable similarities across racial lines. Forty-eight percent of both blacks and whites thought that 16 and 17 year-olds should be encouraged to work, and more blacks than whites thought that those under the age of 16 should be employed part-time. Data from youth surveys do not indicate significant differences in willingness to work among minority youth. In fact, the 1979 NLS data show minority youth more willing than white youth to take particular low-wage jobs and fewer indicating an unwillingness to take most jobs at higher wages.<sup>3</sup>

If there are few differences in expectations along racial lines and if the work

ethic is at least nominally supported by most adults, then what accounts for differences in job seeking behavior among youth? Aside from economic resources, Lerman and Ooms identify several other ways in which the family affects behavior, and many of them are more likely to differ along racial or income lines. One of these differences is the parents' own behavior. Unless the parent reinforces his/her statements about working hard, etc. with behavior that is consistent with the statements, they may have a limited impact on the child. There is certainly anecdotal evidence to support this. The administrators of the Massachusetts employment and training program, ET Choices, say that welfare mothers are conscious of what their children think of their behavior. In fact, its theme for 1988, "My Mom and ET", encourages the mothers to volunteer for the program so that their children will be proud of them. Having a job is also seen as a way of giving the parent the authority to tell their children to work hard in school and to behave in socially acceptable ways. In one anecdote, a participant said that until she had a job she did not feel that she could tell her children what to do and have it carry any weight.

Siblings with jobs are important examples. If brothers or sisters work, there might be additional pressure for them to get a job. It might also provide them with information about part-time or entry level jobs. In the broader sense, the extended family also serves as a job information resource. While President Reagan has frequently pointed to the long list of want ads as an indication that many jobs are available, it is unlikely that his own family members have had to turn to the want ads rather than family or friends for tips on where to apply for jobs. The same is true of most families, even if their range of contacts is much more limited. Here again, racial and economic differences would help to explain the differences in jobholding rates among youth. For example, evidence suggests that minority youth

are more likely to rely on formal sources of job information (want ads, employment services, etc).<sup>4</sup>

### **The Family as a Financial Support System**

The Lerman-Ooms study also answers the question: how are the jobless surviving? Again, the answer to the question is one that should be apparent to most of us; yet we seem not to have recognized it. The jobless are surviving, for the most part, by living at home with their parents. What I find interesting about the information presented in the paper is the similarity in the incomes of families of high school graduates by living arrangement (table 4). Given the variation in income among families and households by race and ethnicity, the degree to which similar incomes produce similar living arrangements is truly amazing. The rankings of living arrangements is almost identical for all ethnic and gender groups. The top four living arrangements, in terms of income, are: 1) parent, no child; 2) spouse, no child; 3) other relative (males only)/ spouse, child (females, except whites); 4) sibling, grandparent (except for black males). The bottom four are: 10) partner, opposite sex (males)/ other relative (females); 9) own child, no parent; 8) living alone (males, white females); 7) nonrelative.

The connection between living arrangements and economic resources suggests two things to the researchers. The first is that most youths living with their parents can afford to forgo current income and concentrate on future employability. The second is that young fathers could provide more child support from their own earnings since they are probably receiving financial support from other household members. But, as even the authors themselves note, this general statement may not apply across the board. Young black males (and Hispanics as well, though less information is available on them) may be contributing (or may be expected to contribute) a larger proportion of the total household income and, cannot afford to

forgo income to participate in a training program or contribute to another household. In fact, the young males who are often the target of training programs (and absentee parent child support orders) are more likely to be in economically disadvantaged households. Some suggestions therefore, must be implemented carefully.

In fact, the discussion of the relationship between employment and family formation among youth points out how little we know about this phenomenon, especially among males. Some data provides us with insights on young women, how early childbearing and living arrangements affect their participation in the labor force, but much less is known about males. Lerman and Ooms point out that absent fathers are no more likely to work than nonfathers, but it is not clear why there are no differences. This avenue must be explored in more detail if we are to develop policies that propose to tax young absent fathers or reduce the incidence of single parenting by young women.

#### **The Unanswered Questions**

While the paper provides us with additional insight into the living arrangements of youth and how these arrangements might influence the labor market behavior of these young people, important questions remain unanswered. As the authors state, knowing the relationship between employment and living arrangements does not tell us the direction of causation. For example, knowing that those who are jobless are more likely to live with relatives does not tell us whether they are not working because they do not have to or they are not living independently because they cannot afford it. Minority youth are more likely to live at home at any given age than are white youth, and this may suggest that the direction of causation runs from lack of employment to living arrangements rather than the other way around. Unless, of course, you believe that minority youth are lazier at

any given age or that their parents can afford to be more indulgent than white parents.

Two other, closely related, questions that are raised by the paper are: 1) can substitute family supports (role models, etc.) be created, and 2) what is the nature and strength of cross-household influences, that is, do relatives, neighbors, and church members have a significant impact on young people's behavior even if their position is inconsistent with that of the parents? Until we can get a better feel for the degree to which influences outside the household can/do overcome or complement the nuclear family's impact on youth attitudes and behavior, we cannot structure appropriate policies to support a productive transition to work for those who need assistance.

#### **Policy Issues**

Lerman and Ooms identify several policy issues. Two have been discussed (targeting future employability and pressing child support enforcement for young fathers living with their parents). Two others are: 1) can programs involve parents in the training/support activities; and 2) should a young person live in the parental home and what strategies can be developed to influence this?

The first policy proposal is hard to disagree with. It is obvious that if a young person is living in an environment that can provide support for his/her activities, this support should be actively sought. At a 1987 conference co-sponsored by the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation and the Spring Hill Center, several participants from youth employment and training programs suggested involving families in the counseling and support activities.<sup>5</sup> They said that family attitudes and demands are sometimes barriers to full participation and support for program goals. If families could be involved, they may be encouraged to reinforce rather than contradict the program messages.

The second suggestion, developing policy incentives for young people to stay in or leave the parental home, is more controversial. How can one answer the question--is it desirable for young, unemployed adults to be living at home? It is not clear to me how that question can be answered in an objective way. For young women with children, staying in the parental home increases the likelihood that they will continue with their education or obtain employment, both of which are highly valued outcomes. However, in some other situations, the answer is less obvious, at least to me. Is it better to have a young male living with his parents so he can afford to support a child in another household or is it better for him to be developing an independent household where he might be more active in the labor market and move more quickly to full support of a family? Clearly the answer is partially dependent on whether the young man can obtain a job that will move him toward independence, but, given that possibility, how does a government program weigh the two alternatives?

A related suggestion, that parental income be discounted or ignored when assessing the youth's eligibility for employment and training programs is another difficult question. As the authors note, such a policy would decrease the likelihood that a young person would leave the parental home in order to qualify for a program, but it would also cut the tie between economic disadvantage and program eligibility. For example, a young person from a middle or upper income family would have had access to a number of economic and social resources prior to leaving home (and is more likely to be the recipient of income transfers from parents after setting up an independent household) than a young person from a lower income family. Does that mean that the two should be treated equally in a program designed to help youth overcome disadvantages in the job market? Clearly, if the two youth live independently, they would be treated the same if they have

similar individual incomes. However, ignoring differences when they live in the parental home does not seem to me to be a step in the right direction.

### Conclusion

The research effort by Robert Lerman and Theodora Ooms makes a significant contribution to our understanding of how families can influence young people's attitudes toward and behavior in the job market. However, it should be viewed as a beginning -- not an end. As they have pointed out, many gaps remain. Until those gaps are filled, we cannot develop a complete set of policy remedies for youths who need assistance in making the transition to the adult labor force. This problem will not go away and as blacks and Hispanics become a larger proportion of the labor force, it will become increasingly a national problem and not just a family one.

### Notes

1. The findings reported here are from unpublished tabulations by Joint Center staff. For further information, contact the author.
2. For a discussion of some of these issues, especially as they pertain to young women, see Kristin A. Moore, Margaret C. Simms, and Charles L. Betsey, Choice and Circumstance: Racial Differences in Adolescent Sexuality and Fertility (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1986).
3. David H. Swinton and Laurence C. Morse, "The Source of Minority Youth Employment Problems," Urban Institute Research Paper, Washington, D.C., May 1983.
4. See Swinton and Morse.
5. Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, "Report on the Conference on Youth Employment Initiatives," New York, New York, May 1988.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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Dr. Simms is a co-author (with Kristin A. Moore and Charles L. Betsey) of Choice and Circumstance: Racial Differences in Adolescent Sexuality and Fertility and is co-editor (with Julianne Malveaux) of Slipping Through the Cracks: The Status of Black Women and (with Samuel L. Myers, Jr.) of The Economics of Race and Crime.

Publications of

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### THE WILLIAM T. GRANT FOUNDATION COMMISSION ON WORK, FAMILY AND CITIZENSHIP

The Grant Commission issued its Interim Report, **The Forgotten Half: Non-College Youth in America**, on January 20, 1988. The Commission's Final Report is **The Forgotten Half: Pathways to Success for America's Youth and Young Families**. Single copies will be available without charge in November 1988.

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#### **American Youth: A Statistical Snapshot** by James Wetzel

Drawing on the latest statistically reliable government surveys, this demographic review captures much of the diversity inherent in a collective portrait of American 15–24 year-olds. Includes data on marriage, childbearing, living arrangements, income, education, employment, health, and juvenile justice. Historical trends as well as future projections are presented along with 12 charts, 18 tables.

#### **Current Federal Policies and Programs for Youth** by J.R. Reingold and Associates

Who is doing what for youth in the federal government? This concise survey of current federal policies and programs for youth in Education, Health and Human Services, Labor, Justice, and Defense provides a one-of-a-kind resource for researchers, practitioners, analysts, and policymakers who want quick access to accurate information about federal youth policy. Includes state-level allocation tables.

#### **Youth Policies and Practices in Selected Countries** by Rosemary George

Presents the salient features of the post-compulsory education and training policies of 11 foreign countries designed to smooth the transition of non-college-bound youth into the workplace. The countries are: Australia, Britain, Canada, Finland, France, West Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Japan, Norway, and Sweden. Includes tables.

#### **Facts and Faith: A Status Report on Youth Service** by Anne C. Lewis. **Commentary** by Jane Kendall

Clarifies the underlying assumptions and reviews the current state of knowledge about youth service programs, including barriers and supports for such programs. The overriding challenge of youth service is to combine the dual needs that youth have: to work and to serve. Citing dozens of local, state, and national youth service programs, this analysis is a vital resource for policymakers and community leaders. Commentary stresses the value of service-learning.

• Copies of these four **Information Papers** are available for \$5.00 each postpaid from: **William T. Grant Foundation Commission on Youth and America's Future**, Suite 301, 1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. 20036-5541.

• The following **Working Papers** were prepared for the Commission's deliberations by a variety of scholars and practitioners. They are available from the Commission at \$10.00 each postpaid.

#### **Youth Transition from Adolescence to the World of Work** by Garth L. Mangum. **Commentaries** by Marvin Lazerson and Stephen F. Hamilton.

Summarizes labor market realities, employer expectations, parental influences, and the difficulties youth experience as they move into the world of work. Highlights vocational education, apprenticeship, and on-the-job training opportunities available for youth. Makes recommendations for how families, schools, and workplaces can aid youth in the transition to work.

#### **Youth and the Workplace: Second-Chance Programs and the Hard-to-Serve** by Thomas J. Smith, Gary C. Walker, Rachel A. Baker, (Public/Private Ventures). **Commentaries** by Gary Burtless, Jacqueline P. Danzberger, Morton H. Sklar, Richard F. Elmore.

Second-chance education, training, and employment programs of the last decade are detailed. Includes tables and an appendix of model programs for at-risk youth. Four commentaries expand the research and policy recommendations.

**Who Will Train and Educate Tomorrow's Workers? The Financing of Non-College-Bound Young Workers' Recurrent Education** by Robert Sheets, Andrew Hahn, Robert Lerman and Erik Butler.

Advocates the need for universal recurrent education and discusses practical ways of achieving expanded post-secondary opportunities for non-college youth, the major losers in today's labor market. Describes public, private, and cooperative strategies that can begin to close the gap between education and work.

**Youth and Work: What We Know, What We Don't Know, What We Need to Know** by Ivan Charner and Bryna Shore Fraser (National Institute for Work and Learning). **Commentaries** by Sue E. Berryman and Hayes Mizell.

A comprehensive analysis of research on the educational, occupational, and personal benefits youth accrue through work. Examines work patterns of demographic subgroups, roles and responsibilities of youth workers, reasons for and attitudes toward participation in work, and actual work experiences.

**The Bridge: Cooperative Education for All High School Students** by Cynthia Parsons. **Commentaries** by Dennis Gray and David Lynn, Morgan V. Lewis, Roy L. Wooldridge.

Calling for a fundamental change in American high schools, the founder of a successful Vermont community service program presents a rationale and methodology for experiential and cooperative education models. Underscores the benefits of combining learning and doing in a school-based, supervised setting.

**What Does the Independent Sector Do for 16-24 Year-Olds?** by Miriam M. Wood. **Commentaries** by Virginia Hodgkinson and Leonard W. Stern.

Identifies, quantifies, and analyzes the role of independent sector agencies and organizations serving 16-24 year-olds. Interprets factors, including funding and organizational barriers, that affect the vitality of human service agencies.

**The Interaction of Family, Community, and Work in the Socialization of Youth** by Stephen F. Hamilton. **Commentaries** by John Ogbu and Paul Riesman.

Explores the critical connections among family, community, and the workplace as they interact with young people. Calls for establishing intentional policy among these three spheres of influence to bolster their separate, but interconnected roles in socializing youth.

**The Difference that Differences Make: Adolescent Diversity and Its Deregulation** by Melvin D. Levine, M.D. **Commentaries** by Michael S. Wald and John H. Martin.

Discusses how teaching methods and expectations can constrict the ways in which young people learn, denying many access to education and employment opportunities. Contends that predetermined memory, verbal, and written criteria—to which a large number of students cannot and do not respond well—are often the only vehicles for showing knowledge. Argues for a wider lens through which to view young people and their abilities.

**Transitional Difficulties of Out-of-Home Youth** by Joy Duva and Gordon Raley. **Commentaries** by Eileen M. Pasztor and Peter R. Correia III and Anita Fream.

A targeted look at a vulnerable part of the youth population—foster care youth and runaways—who they are, how many they are, what programs serve them, what special problems they encounter in their transition to adulthood, what more needs to be done. Examines independent living programs that assist older out-of-home youth in preparing for life and work.

**The Transition to Adulthood of Youth with Disabilities** by David Vandergoot, Amy Gottlieb, and Edwin W. Martin. **Commentaries** by Sharon Stewart Johnson and Diane Lipton and Mary Lou Breslin.

Cites youth with disabilities as an economically disadvantaged subgroup and explores family support, education, and employment issues as well as the barriers to community participation and self-sufficiency particular to these youth. Includes extensive research findings and policy recommendations.

**Mutuality in Parent-Adolescent Relationships** by James Youniss. **Commentaries** by Ann C. Crouter and John H. Lewko.

Through a comprehensive review of recent research, counters popular mythology that adolescent relationships with parents and peers are negative. Provides a context for adolescent-parent and adolescent-peer relationships to guide program development and policy considerations.

**Communities and Adolescents: An Exploration of Reciprocal Supports** by Joan Wynn, Harold Richman, Robert A. Rubenstein, and Julia Littell, with Brian Britt and Carol Yoken. **Commentaries** by Diane P. Hedin and Judith B. Erickson.

What can communities do to be more responsive to youth and what can communities expect from youth? Explores the rich variety of community supports that can be made available to adolescents if individual communities decide to make youth a priority. Appendix includes 22 selected studies describing the differing impacts of community supports on adolescents.

**Determinants of Youth's Successful Entry into Adulthood** by Sarah Gideonse. **Commentaries** by Elijah Anderson and David F. Ricks.

What prevents youth from successful entry into adulthood: individual defects or environment flaws? Addresses the factors which account for the difficulties youth have in assuming adult roles. Examines characteristics and circumstances that promote positive changes in young people and explains why it is never too late for interventions—even for youth with multiple problems.

**Family Influences on Transitions to the Adult Job Market** by Robert I. Lerman and Theodora Ooms. **Commentaries** by Frank F. Furstenberg, Jr. and Margaret Simms.

Analyzes the often ignored interrelationship of family influences and youth employment decisions. Emphasizes the critical connections among youth's living arrangements, the responsibilities of young people, and their choices about work.

**Barriers to Developing Comprehensive and Effective Youth Services** by William Treanor. **Commentaries** by David Richart and Dorothy Stoneman.

A provocative discussion of the youth service world: prevailing attitudes toward youth, history, funding dilemmas, and leadership and staffing scenarios. Recommends a prototype for youth service systems.